University of Michigan

Capstone: Practicum

Fundraising Intern; Hatima Institute International

Analyzing the Impacts of International versus Community Based Organizations on Food

Security

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Field Report I: Anticipations and Aspirations: A Pre-Internship Exploration into Fundraising at

the Hatima Institute International

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From April through June of 2023, I completed an internship with Hatima Institute International Uganda. This organization is an non-governmental organization based in Kampala, Uganda.[1] I completed this internship in a remote role being based in Michigan. This women-led organization focuses on addressing challenges in development, particularly in rural and disadvantaged communities. Hatima Institute International Uganda was founded in 2018 in order to mobilize communities in addressing issues of development. Today, the organization has four key programs: Women's Rights, Youths, Farmer Rights, and Transparency. While the first three programs are established, their "Transparency" project is not, and therefore will not be discussed in this report. Hatima Institute International is committed to advancing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals throughout Uganda through these four programs.

The Women's Rights program at Hatima Institute International is guided by a mission aimed at "contributing to the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls and empowering them to effectively participate in socio-cultural, political, and economic decision-making" (Namara, 2022). Through this transformative program, Hatima Institute International endeavors to empower women, enabling them to serve as inspirational role models within their communities and, in turn, uplift both individual and collective standards of living. Research findings illuminate the pressing challenges faced by women in Uganda, particularly in terms of the disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work. Shockingly, women aged 15 and older spend approximately "14.6% of their time on unpaid care and domestic work, compared to 8.8% spent by men"(Country fact sheet: UN Women Data Hub, 2023). This stark inequality not only hinders women's pursuit of other opportunities but also perpetuates gender disparities in various aspects of life. Additionally, the program responds to the alarming reality that a significant percentage of Ugandan women, aged 15 to 49, report having experienced

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[1] Bakule Building, Suite L04, Gayaza-Kampala Road, Kampala, Uganda.

"physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months," standing at 26.1% (Country fact sheet: UN Women Data Hub, 2023). This distressing statistic underscores the urgent need for comprehensive interventions that address the root causes of violence against women. The Women's Rights program, through targeted initiatives, seeks to break down barriers, challenge societal norms, and provide women with the resources and skills necessary to actively engage in decision-making processes. By fostering an environment of empowerment, the program aims to cultivate a new generation of female leaders who can contribute to dismantling systemic inequalities.

The "Youths" project spearheaded by the Hatima Institute International is dedicated to placing a paramount focus on the empowerment of the younger generations (Namara, 2022). This initiative aims to equip and prepare them for active and meaningful participation in the decision-making processes integral to national development. The significance of this project is particularly underscored by the challenges faced by the youth in the wake of recent rural-to-urban migrations. The transition from rural to urban settings has been marked by various socio-economic complexities, and one of the most pressing issues is the insufficient rate of job creation (Namara, 2022). The growing population sizes in urban areas have outpaced the opportunities for employment, disproportionately affecting the younger demographic. Recognizing this disparity, the Hatima Institute International aims to address the unique struggles faced by the youth, acknowledging that they have borne the brunt of these challenges. The "Youths" project operates as a catalyst for positive change, striving to bridge the gap between the aspirations of the younger generations and the opportunities available to them. By prioritizing empowerment, the initiative seeks to nurture the skills, knowledge, and resilience necessary for the youth to actively engage in shaping the trajectory of their nations. Through targeted

interventions, the Hatima Institute International aims to create a more inclusive and equitable environment, ensuring that the potential of the youth is harnessed for the collective benefit of society.

Hatima Institute International's dedicated project, focusing on Farmers' Rights and Livelihoods, is steadfast in its mission to "empower small-holder farmers to practice modern farming for better and sustainable yields" (Namara, 2022). In Uganda, where agricultural production contributes a significant 24.01% to the country's gross domestic product, encompassing crops such as coffee, tea, sugar, corn, sorghum, and a variety of livestock, the importance of uplifting the farming community cannot be overstated (O'Neill, 2022). As of Fiscal Year 2022/23, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) reported that approximately 68% of the country's working population was engaged in agriculture (Uganda - agricultural sector, 2023). Recognizing the pivotal role of agriculture in the nation's economy and the livelihoods of a substantial portion of the workforce, Hatima Institute International's project is strategically designed to address the challenges faced by small-holder farmers. The primary objective is to provide education and resources to farmers, imparting knowledge on "efficient and sustainable" farming practices. By doing so, the project aims to bring about positive transformations in multiple dimensions. First and foremost, the focus is on enhancing yields, not only in terms of quantity but also sustainability, ensuring that the farming practices adopted are environmentally responsible. Moreover, the project recognizes the multifaceted impact of improved farming techniques. It seeks to address nutritional gaps by promoting the cultivation of diverse and nutrient-rich crops. This, in turn, contributes to the well-being of the rural population by fostering better nutrition and health outcomes. Simultaneously, the emphasis on modern and sustainable farming practices aligns with broader environmental conservation goals. By

educating farmers on eco-friendly approaches, Hatima Institute International aims to contribute to environmental safety in rural areas, fostering a balanced relationship between agricultural activities and the ecosystems they operate within.

Through this internship experience, I hoped to grow, and gain experience in my field of interest. This was my first opportunity to view issues I research in an active, real-world scenario, rather than through the research and work of others. I was also excited for the opportunity to use the knowledge and skill sets I gained through this experience in my academic endeavors following this position. I hoped to build my experience in working in the nonprofit sector with a specific focus on human rights in African countries. This was my first experience not only working directly with Africans, but also working in human rights. I believed through working as a fundraiser, I would be able to have a holistic experience with the nonprofit by working directly on all projects on a local level as well as managing external communications on an international level.

During the process of researching Hatima Institute International prior to beginning my work there, I was drawn to their projects centered around Women's Rights and Farmers' Rights and Livelihoods. My interest in these two projects was due to my academic experience researching related topics and issues throughout sub-Saharan African countries. I was interested in comparing the practices of a local organization to the policy recommendations of scholars and United States foreign policy leaders that I had seen or heard address these issues. Going into the interview process, my interest peaked knowing that this would be the first opportunity to work on human rights initiatives, and be able to make a positive impact in the world. With the exception of jobs in the service industry, this was the first opportunity presented to me to work outside of United States politics. I thought that this position would potentially allow me to

connect the international policies I had researched during my time at the Kingdom of Bahrain Embassy to the United States to the real world, viewing their direct impacts on the lives of Ugandans.

Having never worked directly in fundraising, I was eager to learn how to create fundraising campaigns utilizing various social media platforms, as well as to be trained in grant writing. I had been told by previous employers that fundraising was the backbone of working at any nonprofit organization, and, therefore, was a skill not only critical to growing in my field, but would also set me apart from other recent graduates entering the non-profit industry. During a previous internship experience, I spent a short period of time being taught the importance of telling a story when requesting funding or donations in order to connect the donor to the non-profit. Through grant writing, I was able to build on my storytelling skills, as I was able to tell and retell the organizations background story, as well as outline the project in need of funding in multiple ways in order to be the best fit for each individual grant requested.

While pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Global Studies, I established a focus in Globalization and Development, choosing to center my research around how foreign policies of developed countries directly impacted general populations in developing countries. My undergraduate thesis examined the impacts of the medical aid industry on the Kenyan population, using the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), COVID-19 relief, and the Global Gag rule as specific case studies. As a candidate for a Master's Degree in International and Regional Studies with a focus in sub-Saharan Africa, I have shifted my focus to the international world's impacts on food security in Zambia through contributions to economic growth, food aid, and environmental sustainability. Prior to accepting the internship, I intended to write a graduate thesis on the impacts of food and nutritional security in Zambia through aid

programs originating from the United States. I hoped that working on Hatima Institute International's "Farmers' Rights" program would allow me to gain more knowledge on the topic of sustainable agriculture practices achievable for small-holder farmers. It is well known that, globally, those who live in rural areas or live in a low-income household are not able to easily follow sustainable practices in their everyday life, nor are they able to afford consistent, nutritional levels of food. These communities are also at a higher risk of being negatively impacted by changes in the environment when it comes to agricultural production. Through lectures and assigned readings from my courses at the University of Michigan, I have learned that women are disproportionately impacted by issues of climate change and food security. For this reason, I believed that working on projects through the organization's "Women's Rights" program would bring me closer to understanding just how disproportionate the impacts are in terms of gender. Overall, entering this position, I felt that I would be able to gain real world insights into my research interests.

Ahead of my internship experience at the Hatima Institute International, I was excited to gain real experience in the nonprofit sector, working on issues I have been researching for years. I believed that this position would allow me to gain a new perspective on these issues. This perspective would rely on qualitative data, whereas my research has always centered around quantitative data. A new perspective would also be provided through the location of the work completed. My research has always been focused on Kenya, Tanzania, and, more recently, Zambia. By working for Hatima Institute International, I was able to view issues of human rights in a comparative analysis. This allowed me to strengthen my research by connecting issues throughout the region of East Africa. However, this also helped me strengthen my fundraising strategies, and my arguments for funding in all grant applications. By showing these issues were

not necessarily unique to the country of Uganda, or the regions we established projects in, but that Hatima Institute International's approach to combating these issues was indeed different from that of major organizations including the United Nations and USAID. I was able center my comparisons around the argument of outside resources and planning versus resources provided by and plans created by those who have lived in the region their entire lives and are directly impacted by the issues of focus.

University of Michigan

Field Report II: Assessing Impact: A Reflective Analysis of Fundraising Initiatives at the Hatima

Institute International

Submitted March 1, 2024

During my interview for the position at Hatima Institute International, I was enthusiastic about the prospect of contributing to the development of their fundraising department. As an intern, I initially anticipated working closely with a direct supervisor to support the execution of an ongoing fundraising campaign. However, my expectations underwent a significant shift within the first week of my role, as I discovered that the organization predominantly relied on word-of-mouth and personal networks for generating revenue. Contrary to my assumptions, there was no designated "director of fundraising" or a comparable role, and I soon realized that the responsibility of shaping and executing fundraising initiatives would fall squarely on my shoulders, with little to no supervision or guidance.

I dedicated my initial weeks to extensive research on crafting effective fundraising campaigns tailored specifically for non-governmental organizations. This exploration led me to the realization that, before delving into fundraising initiatives, Hatima Institute International needed to revitalize its existing outreach and promotion strategy, which was underutilized at that point. While an introductory newsletter had been crafted and circulated among employees' personal networks, the organization had existing social media profiles that were not effectively leveraged.

In response to this realization, I worked on optimizing the underutilized social media profiles, strategizing on content that would resonate with the organization's mission and target audience. My efforts extended beyond the digital realm as I focused on enhancing the visibility of Hatima Institute International within the community. These initiatives aimed not only to raise funds but also to foster a sense of connection and engagement with the organization's mission. As a result, the subsequent fundraising campaigns saw increased participation and donations, signaling the success of the integrated approach I had undertaken. While acting remotely made

physical outreach difficult, I was able to focus on targeting my outreach to the communities around me. This included discussing the organization's mission and goals with faculty and students at the University of Michigan. While discussing the organization with my Swahili professors, we began planning to invite the Hatima Institute International's president to come to one of the events hosted by the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies (DAAS) in the Fall 2024 semester. Our plan was to connect students conducting research related to Africa to non-profits and non-governmental organizations in order to gain real-world experience that related to their studies. I also discussed the organization's work with PhD students who came to the university from Uganda. My hope in doing so was that they would in turn discuss the organization's work with friends, family, and their networks still residing in Uganda.

One of my first projects was building up the organization's LinkedIn profile in order to help create a user-friendly platform for future growth. I started by sharing the organization's profile with my personal network, including my friends, family, former colleagues, and those within the African Studies Center at the University of Michigan who may be interested in the work completed by the Hatima Institute International. In the immediate, this allowed me to build a small social media following for the organization. However, having used LinkedIn myself, I knew that a personal network could be utilized beyond simply adding to the follower count. After following the account, I requested that my network also subscribe to the organization's newsletter and interact with at least one of the organization's posts on the platform. By simply liking or sharing a singular post, the Hatima Institute International would be able to then reach the networks of those who interacted with the post. Within the first week of my work on the organization's LinkedIn profile, I was able to grow their following by double that of when I joined the company.

As stated previously, the only newsletter that the organization had created and sent out was one introducing the Hatima Institute International to those who subscribed to hear more about the organization. There had been two others created, introducing specific programs to subscribers, but they had neither been completed nor sent out. My first task was completing those newsletters, updating the statistics of those served in each, and creating two other newsletters introducing the other projects and highlighting the success those had seen up to that point. I then researched the best database to use to grow the organization's email base.

The primary issue I ran into during this was focusing the data to email addresses originating in Uganda, or East Africa in general. As the Hatima Institute International is not a registered 501(c)(3) in the United States, receiving donations from the region in which they are located would be easier than finding donors based in the United States. As of 2021, only 10 percent of the Ugandan population used the internet (The World Bank, 2021). In 2023, Eastern Africa only saw 23.1 percent of its population using the internet (Galal, 2023). From my time working as an intern in various nonprofits in the United States, I knew there were companies which collected data on individuals in order to sell their email address to other organizations. This data could be filtered by age, gender, and location, as well as more specific information such as political affiliation. However, due to the general lack of internet access in Uganda and the greater East African region, as well as general search algorithms at my access, I struggled to find a reputable system to search for email addresses in the region. After contacting a company based in the United States, I was informed that they did not have much information for the region either, stating I would only really be able to find data for populations in the United States and Europe. The second issue I encountered here was the cost of purchasing said data. With the organization already struggling to bring in a sustainable amount of revenue, spending what little

they had on data for people not even in the region would not be the most effective use of funds at that time.

As part of my responsibilities at Hatima Institute International, I undertook the task of authoring blog content for publication on the organization's official website. This collaborative effort involved all team members contributing articles that aligned with the central issues addressed by Hatima Institute International through its diverse programs.

My first blog post, I chose to address women's rights in Uganda. This subject matter held particular significance in light of the organization's overarching mission, which emphasized the empowerment of women and the advocacy for gender equality within the region. The objective of the blog extended beyond explaining the challenges faced by women in Uganda, seeking to spotlight the Hatima Institute International's substantive initiatives aimed at effecting positive change. The blog reads as follows:

> On December 10, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly officially added Gender Equality to the international human rights law by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 2010). In 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), often regarded as an International Bill of Rights for Women, was adopted by the United Nations (United Nations, 2010). In 1995, Uganda introduced the new constitution, a document which opposes laws and practices that violate the rights and dignity of women in the country (Kiiza, 2022). However, like much of the world, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted threats Ugandan women faced every day. Ugandan women struggle to progress in their careers, gain proper qualifications and skills, and maintain a strong sense of self-confidence (Kiiza, 2022). COVID-19 isolation also highlighted rates of domestic abuse and lack of sexual education. Reports state that during pandemic lockdowns, approximately 90,000 girls under the age of 18 in the country were pregnant (Kiiza, 2022).

> Hatima Institute International maintains a mission of contributing to the elimination of violence against women and girls, and empower them to effectively participate in socio-cultural, political, and economic decision-making. The struggles Ugandan women face every day are actively being addressed by Hatima Institute International through this mission, as we strive to encourage and teach women about their rights, worth, and how to achieve their dreams. We up-hold the beliefs of the United Nations and strive to ensure that international laws are upheld so that women achieve equality.

This experience not only refined my proficiency in written communication but also underscored the strategic significance of articulate language in advancing the objectives of a nonprofit organization. It elucidated the transformative potential of well-crafted narratives in fostering advocacy, education, and community engagement, thereby augmenting Hatima Institute International's endeavors in championing women's rights and social justice in Uganda.

During my time at the Hatima Institute International, a significant challenge revolved around the difficulty of obtaining crucial information for grant applications due to the lack of responsiveness from my colleagues. This recurring issue consistently led to the failure to meet deadlines for submitting grant applications. Adding to the complexity was the fact that my role was remote, and I operated from a distance while my coworkers were based in Uganda.

Despite my persistent efforts to seek assistance from the organization's leadership, specifically the president or vice-president, such attempts seldom resulted in the required support. The lack of cooperation from both colleagues and higher-ups heightened the frustration caused by the breakdown in communication. The geographical dispersion of the team, coupled with communication challenges, not only hindered the timely submission of grant applications but also strained the overall operational efficiency of the Hatima Institute International. The collaborative relationship vital for a remote team was compromised, hampering the organization's effectiveness in achieving its goals.

This experience underscored the urgent need to establish a more resilient and responsive communication structure within the organization. Initiatives such as regular check-ins, the implementation of clear communication protocols, and the cultivation of a culture of accountability are vital to bridging these communication gaps. Such measures are essential for optimizing the organization's potential, ensuring successful grant applications, and fostering a

more collaborative and efficient work environment, regardless of geographical disparities. In my position, I was unable to find any effective solution. However, I voiced my concerns regularly and made suggestions such as implementing regularly occurring staff meetings in order to discuss what we were each working on. From having had similar meetings at other organizations, I knew this would also give us an opportunity to request assistance from others within the organization. While some coworkers agreed that this would be beneficial, ultimately higher-ups never approved this proposal. Another suggestion made was to have all coworkers create a file with documents and resources that were regularly requested by foundations on their grant portals. While higher-ups supported this proposal, they failed to enforce the creation or upkeep of said files. Half of my co-workers did provide said documents, but the other half were those already unresponsive during the previous requests.

University of Michigan

Field Report III: Reflecting on Growth: Evaluating the Pros and Cons of My Experience at the

Hatima Institute International

Submitted March 12, 2024

Throughout my time at the Hatima Institute International, communication was always a point of concern. From missing deadlines to feeling lost on what projects were enacted versus still in a state of theory and planning, my work and ultimate success at the Hatima Institute International was constantly hindered due to my coworkers simply not being responsive. Ultimately, this led to me ending my time with the organization in June of 2023, despite having been asked if I would remain on past the requirement of my Capstone Practicum. In June of 2023, I had reached out to the president of the organization several times regarding a multitude of applications. As Ruth Namara was my primary point of contact for all grant needs, I had rarely had an issue receiving the information needed from her. However, despite repeated requests, I received no response during the entire month. Eventually, I noticed that not only had my messages gone unresponded to, they had also gone unread. Concerned, I reached out to one of my colleagues, Peter Bamuhigire, which I was closest to, who stated she had also been unresponsive to him throughout the month. Knowing that this was a company-wide issue, we reached out to the vice-president, Loy Natukunda, who informed us that Ms Namara had been in and out of the hospital due to health concerns, but assured us that she would be back to work soon. She offered to assist us in attaining the information needed from Ms Namara in the meantime. However, we soon realized that she did not have access to the information or materials needed to truly assist in mine or Mr. Bamuhigire's tasks. Due to this, our work was put back on hold. Unable to submit any grants, I repeatedly asked the Ms Natukunda if there were other tasks I could be working on while we awaited Ms Namara's return. I was always told that she would look into this, but never given anything in response. Eventually, I realized that it was in my best interest to part-ways with the organization, as I was no longer able to complete my job, and therefore my professional education had been brought to a halt. After discussing this

issue with the Master's in International and Regional Studies (MIRS) advisor, Charlie Polinko, the program agreed that, while the experience gained during my time with the Hatima Institute International was beneficial, remaining on without completing work would not serve my Practicum experience in a way that was beneficial to my professional development or my Capstone project.

I was concerned that, when it was time to ask for confirmation of my work, I would face the same lack of communication. For this reason, I not only emailed Ms Namara, but also Ms Natukunda; Joseph Mugarura, director of policy and research; and Peter Bamuhigire, the organization's information and communications technology (ICT) specialist. I was pleased to hear that all of them not only emailed Dr. Pär Cassel of the Master's in International and Regional Studies program and Charlie Poliko to confirm my employment at the Hatima Institute International. I was even more thrilled to hear that Ms Namara, Mr. Mugarura, and Mr. Bamuhigire also spoke to my work and skills gained during my time with the organization.

From this position, I learned how to present an individual project in multiple ways depending on the funding focuses of the foundations I was approaching for funding. This was an extremely useful skill, as I now work as a grant writer for a consulting firm. As one of my clients, Precious Project, Inc., is a non-profit focused on providing education to impoverished children in the village of Nshupu in Tanzania, many of our funders focus on advancing education. However, when it comes to funding the expansion of their solar and water project in order to sustain and expand their on-site farm which feeds students attending both their primary and secondary school children, I often have to present this project in a way which seeks to advance education in the region.

Another skill I took from this experience was more on the personal and emotional side rather than professional. While dealing with poor communication, I often found myself emotionally overwhelmed and frustrated. While these were not new emotions for me to face in the workforce, this was the first time I felt I had no real outlet or solution to the issues at hand. I am always the first to admit that I am not the best at managing my emotions, as I either ignore them until they become too much to handle or am blunt and aggressive in the moment. However, knowing tone can often come off more aggressive than intended over email or text messaging, I was careful to control the latter of reactions. However, also being determined to not allow the first reaction to become the situation, knowing it would only hinder my ability to complete tasks or academic work, I learned to manage my expectations. Going into new tasks without the expectation of it being completed easily or receiving help from my coworkers allowed me to form a new mindset and approach to my job. I shifted tasks over to ones I was in complete control of, choosing grant applications which I had all the necessary information for or focusing on fundraising through email and social media campaigns.

Prior to accepting my position at the Hatima Institute International, I had accepted a position as a research intern at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United States of America, based in Washington, D.C. This position lasted from January to June of 2023. My research at this position focused on major news developments, scholars in the field of Middle Easterns Studies, and other small projects centered around where Bahraini representatives were set to visit. This position forced me to research global events that would typically not appear on my normal newsfeeds, including events in Uganda and East Africa. Many of my projects centered around the United States' foreign policy were intended to focus on how said policies impacted Middle Eastern countries. However, by delving deeper into these policies as required

for the position, I realized how they also impacted those served by the Hatima Institute International.

From January to April of 2023, I worked as an Aware intern at Rideshare2Vote, a political non-profit focused on providing free rides to the polls for low propensity voters in 15 states throughout the United States. It was during this experience that I was given a crash course in grant writing. While never being assigned to this form of fundraising, our director saw the importance of training us on every aspect of working in and running a political non-profit. In April, I was asked to take on the role of Intern Coordinator, as our Education Director had parted ways with the company. I choose to follow his lead and create a curriculum centered around a holistic experience where interns would be able to take on any role in a non-profit at the end of their internship experience. It was during this period that I met Jon Thomas, CEO of Jon Thomas Consulting, a company which provides grant writing services to nonprofits throughout the world. He helped develop the portion of the curriculum focused on grant writing and fundraising. The curriculum meeting held allowed me to further develop my grant writing skills, and manage multiple fundraising campaigns while still working at the Hatima Institute International.

In regards to my research, this internship allowed me to view how a local non-governmental organization is able to make impacts in their community, giving me a new perspective on research topics I have been pursuing for years. In the past, I have looked at the impacts of the United States government through USAID and the European Union through their aid programs in East African countries. Primarily, I looked at the impacts of aid in the food and agricultural sector as well as the health care sector. At the Hatima Institute International, I was hopeful to learn more about their program centered around Farmers' Livelihoods.

One of my chief complaints, centering around lack of communication, was that there seemed to be a lack of transparency regarding the activities which fell under each program. While the organization's website provides information regarding the need for each program, it does not provide any details on the solutions proposed and pursued by the Hatima Institute International. From discussions with colleagues, I learned that, as the organization was fairly new, the majority of work completed was focused around giving voice to those who are often less voiceless. From conversations with local farmers, one issue that kept arising was the scarcity of resources such as fertilizers. From researching global conflicts during my time at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United States of America, I came to learn that shortages of fertilizer was, in-part, due to Russia's war in Ukraine. I questioned if Ugandan small-share farmers knew that global conflicts and relationships were at the center of their struggles. While this question went unanswered, later research only strengthened my inference, as the Malagasy people of Madagascar were found to not understand the global want for sapphires, believing that the demand for said stones was due to more than their aesthetic appeal. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, artisanal miners only know of the high demand for cobalt, not knowing exactly why demand is so high. Learning this information while enrolled in a Senior Seminar focused on Exploitation and the Environment under the teaching of Dr. Brian Klein at the University of Michigan, I again wondered if farmers' in Uganda understood the extent global conflicts played in their day-to-day lives. I had similar questions regarding the other initiatives pursued by the Hatima Institute International. I was told nothing of any program other than the basic need for each initiative. I was informed that their "Transparency" program was the newest of the four programs, and therefore had accomplished the least. From the lack of information provided, but the constant references to family and friends, I assumed that the primary impact of

the organization's four programs extended to personal networks rather than the region or country as a whole.

At the end of my time with the Hatima Institute International, I knew that I wanted to remain working in either the non-profit or non-governmental organization sectors. However, having experienced multiple issues resulting in stress and frustration under a start-up, grassroots organization, I knew I wanted to transition to a more established, larger organization. As a result, I am now working for Jon Thomas Consulting Firm, based in the District of Columbia, working remotely. I was recruited to this company by the CEO, having worked alongside him while he was contracted with Rideshare2Vote. Knowing my background in African studies, and my eagerness to transition out of United States politics, he requested I come work as a Development Associate for non-profits, with the primary task of grant writing. At this time, I have four clients, all of which are global non-profits. The first is the World Health Dental Organization (WHDO), who provides free dental care to the Maasai people in the Maasai Mara region of Kenya. The second organization is Precious Project, Inc., a non-profit based in the Nshupu village of Tanzania. This organization provides primary and secondary school education to impoverished children, as well as maintains an orphanage, boarding school, and small-share farm in order to further assist the students. I then work with SunRise Studios Collective, an organization who sets up low-budget recording studios throughout the world in order to record and preserve cultural and traditional music, with three studios in Kenya and one in Uganda. By working with these three organizations, I have not only been able to use my knowledge in the Swahili language, but also my research in various aspects of human rights in the region to better strengthen their fundraising and donation requests. My last client, the Desai Foundation, focuses on empowering women and girls in India through addressing the stigma around menstruation, and educating

these populations on menstrual and reproductive health. While I am not familiar with the communities served by the Desai Foundation, I am again able to use my knowledge in health and human rights to help strengthen their fundraising campaigns.

While my time at the Hatima Institute International did not play out how I expected, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work for this information. It allowed me to gain skills that I am now using in my career, and intend to continue using in my post-graduate life. This experience also allowed me to create more informed decisions on the path I intend to pursue in my professional life once I graduate from the University of Michigan.

University of Michigan

Final Policy Brief:

Examining the Impacts of Food Security versus Food Sovereignty Initiatives

Submitted April 23, 2024

Abstract

This thesis examines the contrasting outcomes of food assistance programs administered by international organizations and community-based organizations. It delves into the fundamental principles guiding these programs, with international organizations typically prioritizing food security and community-based organizations advocating for food sovereignty. While international organizations possess significant funding and resources, enabling swift implementation of initiatives to address immediate hunger crises, they often fall short in fostering long-term community development. Furthermore, their food aid may lack consideration for cultural appropriateness and nutritional needs, focusing solely on alleviating starvation without addressing underlying issues of malnutrition.

Conversely, community-based organizations operate within the framework of food sovereignty, emphasizing local control over food systems and decision-making processes. Although their initiatives may not yield immediate results due to their reliance on community involvement and acceptance, they are more conducive to sustainable long-term outcomes. These programs foster community development, enhance community independence, and promote food sovereignty by respecting cultural traditions and preferences.

Through a comprehensive analysis of the short and long-term impacts of food assistance programs, this thesis argues that while international organizations excel in providing rapid relief, they often overlook the nuances of local contexts and fail to contribute effectively to lasting community resilience. Conversely, community-based organizations, despite their slower initial progress, emerge as catalysts for sustainable change, fostering empowerment and self-reliance within communities while promoting culturally appropriate and nutritionally sound food systems.

Key Words: Community Based Organizations, International Organizations, Food Assistance Programs, Aid, Food Security, Food Soverignty

Introduction

Upon the culmination of my involvement with the Hatima Institute International, a pressing scholarly question emerged regarding the efficacy of interventions by international organizations versus community based organizations in addressing humanitarian issues, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. This inquiry stems from the overarching objective of leveraging academic research to analyze the relative impact and effectiveness of interventions aimed at advancing human rights and promoting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Subsequently, accepting a position at Jon Thomas Consulting Firm provided an opportunity to further explore this scholarly inquiry, as the role entails engagement with grant writing for international clients, including community based organizations such as Precious Project and the World Health Dental Organization (WHDO), which are actively addressing the Sustainable Development Goals in Tanzania and Kenya, respectively. While my previous research extensively scrutinized the operations of prominent international organizations such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), it has also underscored the need for critical assessment of their long-term impacts. Through a scholarly lens, the juxtaposition of international and community based approaches to development initiatives prompts a fundamental inquiry into the comparative efficacy of interventions and their ability to address the complex challenges faced by communities in the region.

International organizations possess the advantage of expansive global networks and access to diverse funding opportunities, enabling swift implementation of their initiatives on a global scale. This makes the interventions conducted by international organizations extremely

beneficial in the short term, especially in times of crisis, such as during a war or in the immediate aftermath of natural disasters. However, this thesis argues that community based organizations often demonstrate superior effectiveness in the long run. This superiority stems from their nuanced understanding of local community needs, which facilitates greater acceptance and trust from the populations they serve. By operating at the grassroots level, these organizations are extremely knowledgeable and conscious of the social, cultural, and economic dynamics of their communities, allowing them to tailor interventions that are contextually relevant and sustainable over time.

This thesis also demonstrates that, despite their long term effectiveness, community based organizations encounter challenges in the short term due to their reliance on a smaller funding base and limited resources. This constraint often hampers their ability to swiftly address immediate needs or scale up interventions rapidly. However, it is precisely this intimate connection to the communities they serve that enables them to foster lasting impacts, as they prioritize building trust, empowering local leadership, and cultivating ownership of development initiatives within the community fabric. Thus, while international organizations may excel in rapid deployment, community based organizations wield a distinct advantage in fostering enduring change rooted in local realities and aspirations.

The basis of this research is to critically analyze the work of both international and community based organizations in issues regarding food scarcity and malnutrition. This thesis will delve into the background and significance of food security and food sovereignty movements through an examination of case studies derived from personal work experiences and scholarly research. The objective is to gain deeper insights into the strategies implemented to combat food scarcity. Subsequently, the analysis will shift towards exploring the intricate

histories of international and community based organizations, particularly in relation to their current endeavors. This entails assessing how these entities are perceived by and engage with the communities they serve, as well as their funding sources and the ethical dilemmas they confront. Moreover, the examination will scrutinize the policies and initiatives enacted by these organizations to tackle the pressing issues of mass starvation and malnutrition. Utilizing case studies and critical analysis, the thesis aims to offer a thorough understanding of the roles, impacts, and ethical considerations surrounding both local and international organizations in the realm of global development.

Global Institutions and Local Initiatives: A Review of International Organizations and Community Based Efforts in Food Aid

Food scarcity, or a shortage of food, occurs when there is simply not enough food being produced to sustain an individual or community. According to the United Nations' 2023 publication, roughly "2.4 billion people experienced moderate or severe food insecurity and 900 million people faced severe food insecurity" in 2022 (The State of Food Security and Nutrition, 2023). The reasons behind these rising levels of hunger throughout the world are numerous, as well as diverse region to region. In the case of East African countries, the causes of food scarcity are often linked back to extreme weather events, primarily drought and flooding (The Elimination of Food Insecurity, 2000). An analysis of weather patterns in the region showed that "there is no year or season in which the whole region receives normal rainfall and is free from climatic anomalies such as flood or drought" (The Elimination of Food Insecurity, 2000). Saima May Sidik (2023) found that, in 2020, the East African countries "entered its longest and most

severe dry spell in more than 70 years" (Sidik, 2023). Sidik challenges the concept of the "East African climate paradox," which suggests that climate change models cannot effectively predict weather events. She does this by examining the research conducted by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). In her analysis, Sidik (2023) argues that the paradox occurs when models fail to customize predictions to the specific climatic conditions and weather patterns of a region. In contrast, she highlights the adaptable approach demonstrated by FEWS NET, which accurately forecasts droughts through tailored predictions (Sidik, 2023). However, Sidik acknowledges that, due to the increasing intensity of common weather events, such as La Niñas, these tailored models will need continued renovation in the future (Sidik, 2023).

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, Article 25(1), states that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services" (The United Nations, 1948). However, despite this assertion, FAO estimated in 2022 that 2.4 billion people worldwide "experienced moderate to severe food insecurity" and "over 3.1 billion people could not afford a healthy diet" (Holleman, et al., 2023). While Article 25(1) underscores the right to food, it lacks specificity regarding sourcing, quality, cost, or other vital aspects of adequate nutrition. Consequently, "landless former peasants or farmers [struggle] to live off the exports of commodities to the Global North" (Trauger, 2017). Furthermore, organizations with initiatives aimed at food assistance vary significantly from one community, country, or organization to another. The majority of these initiatives fall under either the banner of food security or food sovereignty, each with distinct short term and long term impacts on the communities they serve.

As the complexities of food scarcity become apparent, it is crucial to examine the global efforts and initiatives aimed at addressing this pressing issue. The concept of food security emerged in the 1980s in response to "poverty-related food access issues at the household level" (Cook, 2003). Initially addressing starvation and malnutrition, its evolution has failed to emphasize individuals and communities defining their own food needs within cultural contexts. This evolution intersects with neoliberal ideologies, particularly the promotion of the "global circulation of commodities" (Trauger, 2017). Within this framework, food is increasingly treated as a tradable commodity rather than an inherent human right, complicating efforts to balance economic imperatives with the ethical imperative of ensuring food security for all. This tension underscores the necessity for nuanced approaches that reconcile market-driven dynamics with the pursuit of equitable and sustainable food systems.

In 1996, a monumental movement spanning over 70 countries, comprising more than 200 million small-scale farmers, fundamentally reshaped the discourse and strategies aimed at addressing food insecurity. La Via Campesina spearheaded this transformative shift, introducing the concept of food sovereignty, defined as "the right of peoples to health and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agricultural systems" (Nyéléni, 2007). This paradigm shift represented a departure from conventional approaches to food security, emphasizing not only access to food but also the autonomy of communities to shape their food systems in accordance with their cultural and ecological contexts.

Despite its distinctiveness, the term "food sovereignty" is often conflated with "food security" obscuring their fundamental differences. Essentially, food sovereignty challenges the underlying structures of modern food systems, attributing the roots of the problem to "modern

notions of property rights and global capitalist markets" (Trauger, 2017). This critique underscores a critical divergence between the two concepts: while food security focuses primarily on ensuring access to food, food sovereignty delves deeper into issues of power, control, and self-determination within the food system. By foregrounding the agency of communities in defining and managing their food systems, food sovereignty advocates for a radical reconfiguration of the socio-economic relations that govern food production, distribution, and consumption.

International organizations are those funded and controlled by national governments, such as the United States' USAID and China's BRI. They also include organizations that function as a collaboration between multiple governments, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the FAO. These organizations do not serve a singular region, nor a singular mission, with their efforts and funds being stretched across the world and addressing issues of food security, health care, climate change, women's rights, and other major issues. While their efforts are global and diverse, their primary focus rests in countries and regions that are considered socially and economically "developing," or suffering from a major crisis, such as war or a natural disaster. Despite the diversity seen in their populations being served and issues being addressed, these organizations tend to operate with a "one-size fits all" approach, basic resources to populations in need without any consideration to what is culturally or traditionally appropriate in the foods and other products provided.

Furthermore, many international organizations currently partner with nonprofits and community based organizations in the countries they operate in. At this time, USAID partners with over 4,000 organizations "from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors" (Working With USAID, n.d.). In the FAO's "Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations," the

organization not only states that they work alongside "hundreds" of civil society organizations (CSOs), including nongovernmental organizations and community based organizations, but also that "CSOs' play a crucial role in food security" (FAO Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations, 2013). Despite this, there is no apparent evidence that these organizations' and communities' voices and opinions on policies and projects are reflected in the implementation process.

Community based organizations are nonprofits and non-governmental organizations operating in one specific region, or focusing their efforts on one specific community. For example, in the United States, a community based organization focused on Native American communities may serve multiple Native Communities, each having unique backgrounds and needs. In African countries, these community based organizations may serve a singular country, region, or ethnic or cultural group. Regardless of their scope or stretch, these organizations dedicate their work to serving specific communities and, therefore, addressing specific needs. Due to their proximity and strategic focus, community based organizations are able to approach issues in a way that is unique to the community they serve. As these organizations have specific targets in their communities served, the extent of the projects pursued and issues addressed are unique to their population, and, therefore, so are the activities within each project. For this reason, these organizations avoid the "one-size fits all" approach, and instead craft their interventions utilizing the voices and concerns of those they serve.

When examining community based organizations, a markedly different perspective emerges from the local community regarding the organization and its project implementations. While these organizations may not always be managed by local community members, the community is deeply involved in all project implementations, with project success ultimately tied

to the community's involvement and acceptance. Consequently, community based organizations often prioritize the long term development of the community over implementing short term solutions, a contrast to the approach of international organizations.

There are a multitude of reasons behind an organization's decision to address food sovereignty or food security. In the case of food security, where food products are often exported to regions in need, there is an aspect of job creation to consider. As organizations such as USAID source their products through collaborating with major producers in the United States, the exportation of food, such as corn, not only helps create and support employment opportunities within the United States' agricultural sector, but also provides economic benefit at home. By partnering with existing farms that already act as major producers, there is also a cost-benefit, with the idea that it is cheaper to utilize existing major infrastructure, rather than creating or supporting agricultural infrastructure still in its infancy. The utilization of existing producers and resources also allows international organizations to respond and provide support immediately, rather than waiting several months or years to be able to adequately address the need at hand. In the case of the Israel-Palestine war, aid began arriving within 12 days of the first airstrikes (Kekatos, 2024). By obtaining resources from farmers based in the organization's country of origin, rather than supporting agriculture and food systems in regions in need, international organizations force benefiting communities into a state of dependency (Geran, 1988). However, dependency is not restricted to those in need. As food security initiatives see food as a commodity, their utilization of major farms also puts their home economy in a state of dependency on exportation of aid. If USAID were to change their focus to one of development rather than dependency, there is the potential for employment opportunities within the United

States to be eliminated, and along with that, a sharp decline in economic productivity within the United States' agricultural and food production systems.

On the other hand, the path of food sovereignty works to create opportunities, or advance those that either do not perform optimally or are still in their infancy. For this reason, results from food sovereignty initiatives often take years to fully see and evaluate, making them inefficient when addressing the impacts of a short term crisis. In developing countries and rural areas, these initiatives may also come at a higher financial cost, as advanced resources may not be readily available in the region. For example, farms, such as that at Precious Project, struggling with irrigation may benefit greatly from digging a bore hole to a well system and installing a solar-powered water pump system to collect said water. If the farm is in a rural area, it is likely that these resources would need to be sourced from other areas, and the installation may need expert guidance. As seen during my time working with Precious Project and WHDO, these needs are often difficult, not only to source, but also to implement as it requires the shipping of materials as well as the travel of workers to the site in order to begin work on said project. Even at the base level of production, looking at farming equipment and pesticides, the cost to deliver high-quality materials such as tractors or environmentally friendly pesticides is extremely high. This is not only due to the high likelihood that these materials will need to be imported into the country, but also the underdevelopment of local mail systems in developing countries and rural communities. However, as food sovereignty initiatives give autonomy and power to the communities served, these initiatives will be less costly in the long term, as they ultimately eliminate the need for external intervention and assistance as the local community becomes self-sufficient.

An important aspect of any organization working in developing countries is how the community benefiting from assistance programs perceives it. A quick review of international organizations' websites, such as USAID and BRI, shows a proud display of their physical presence through impact reports and analysis. These reports are widely empirical and quantitative, with little to no reports on the communities' perception of or their involvement with the project. The absence of recognition for community participation in these projects on organizational websites deprives the public of knowing whether community members contributed to the implementation process. This also fosters uncertainty about whether these projects genuinely serve the community in a sustainable, culturally appropriate manner over the long term, or if they merely achieve statistical goals.

Annah Zhu's (2022) investigation of Madagascar's natural resources and Wallace's (2012) examination of the sapphire industry in Madagascar converge on a significant observation: the disjunction between those who extract raw materials and the eventual utilization of the products. This disjunction prompts profound questions regarding the legitimacy of external conservation endeavors in regions where the primary connection is driven by pleasure rather than cultural or historical ties. Both Zhu and Wallace underscore how local producers often speculate about the ultimate destination of their goods, with sapphires presumed to fuel electronics or rosewood thought to be used in dynamite or tires. This uncertainty underscores a fundamental lack of comprehension and control over their own resources in the international market (Zhu, 2022; Wallace, 2012). Moreover, Zhu's examination of Western conservation efforts in Madagascar prompts reflection on the imposition of Western ideologies on African nations. The concept of biodiversity, originating from Western discourse, is employed as a mechanism for exerting control over foreign economies and societies. This raises ethical concerns about the infringement

on local autonomy and the prioritization of external interests over indigenous needs (Zhu, 2022). In light of these observations, the issue of self-determination emerges as pivotal. During the era of decolonization, African leaders championed the concept of self-determination, drawing inspiration from the United States' philosophy of independence. However, the imposition of external conservation agendas challenges this principle, highlighting the tension between international intervention and local sovereignty.

Expanding our lens beyond the specific case studies of Madagascar, the challenges posed by external conservation agendas in Africa evoke broader considerations about the intersection of Western ideologies and indigenous autonomy. As of 2008, 80 percent of the local Maasai pasture in Kenya land had been made into conservation land by the West, with tourism forcing changes to the Massai culture (Simpson, 2008). In 2019, Survival Intervention featured a resident who revealed that despite local objections, conservation barriers were erected in their community. Now, when locals enter their forests, they are accused of destroying the environment and therefore beaten with machetes despite doing nothing (Survival Intervention, 2019). Aby L. Sène argues that, in order to "preserve biodiversity, protected area lands should be returned to African indigenous communities" (Sène, 2022). Sène defines Western conservation efforts in African lands as "a colossal land grab," reminiscent of the scramble for Africa seen in the 1880s. She goes on to state that 66 percent of land designated "protected" globally is found in the Global South (Sène, 2022). Sène argues that conservationists believe Africa's "exploding population" is the driver behind wildlife extinction, when in fact it is the forced displacement of African people that has driven them further into wildlife territories (Sène, 2022). These conservation-related challenges are of utmost importance when considering the broader context of food security. A poignant example lies within the Maasai community of Kenya, where

ancestral lands, historically utilized for cattle grazing—a vital aspect of their cultural and subsistence practices—have been designated as "protected" by international entities. This classification imposes severe restrictions on the community's access to these lands, consequently disrupting their ability to procure culturally significant foods. The literature consistently emphasizes the disconnect between international organizations and local communities, attributing it to the vague reasoning and perceived controlling nature of their actions.

Meanwhile, as depicted in the 2008 documentary, "Milking the Rhino," locally founded non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focused on community based conservation consult with the Himba people to understand their needs before initiating projects (Simpson, 2008). The Himba people expressed concerns about ecotourism hindering their ability to clear land for grazing and farming, as cutting and burning trees would deter birds and other local wildlife, which tourists travel long distances to see (Simpson, 2008). They also discussed how land previously used for grazing had been appropriated to create conservation areas (Simpson, 2008).

However, the vague reasoning behind policies and initiatives also relates to another, significant aspect of control beyond that of land: the commercialization of food. This transition prompts an examination of how such dynamics not only exacerbate the existing rift between global institutions and local populations but also contribute to broader socioeconomic and environmental challenges within the food system. When agricultural products are seen as commodities rather than necessities, the door is opened for small-scale farmers to specialize in certain commodities that have a high demand, using agricultural funding assistance packages towards mass production. One of the primary issues from specialization is that farmers face a heightened risk from external economies, including changes in purchasing preferences and economic decline. In 2020, demand for agricultural commodities faced a "dramatic decline" as

restaurants throughout the world saw fewer sales due to global shut-downs and stay-at-home orders (Johansson, 2020). Johansson (2020) argues that, as a result, food prices also declined, which resulted in farmers struggling to maintain adequate income for their basic necessities, as well as maintaining their businesses. Another issue within this system that is frequently mentioned in the literature is the heightened risk from climate change and soil degradation. Monocropping is known to reduce nutrients and organic matter in soil, not only making it less productive over time, but also causing soil erosion ("How Industrial Agriculture Affects Our Soil," 2018). The push for increased production from specialized agricultural markets by international actors puts developing countries in a precarious position. They may soon find themselves reliant on the same international organizations for assistance. This dependence arises either when they produce food surplus to their own needs or when soil degradation prevents further food production.

International organizations have a distinct advantage in terms of attaining funding for projects due to their overall governing body. In terms of organizations such as USAID or the BRI, funds are obtained directly from the sponsor nations' government. This is due to the overarching policies and procedures being directed by the nations' governing body. For USAID, overall policy guidance comes from the United States Secretary of State, who takes their guidance from the Office of the President of the United States. However, the organization being an independent federal government agency, USAID receives their funding from the United States Congress (How to Work with USAID, 2024). Larger international organizations, such as the FAO and World Bank are set up as intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), or a collaborative organization involving multiple nations. In these cases, funding comes from "voluntary contributions" from member states (Resource Mobilization, n.d.). Although this doesn't imply

boundless funding for these organizations, it does provide them with the ability to expand their operations. This expansion encompasses hiring more personnel, extending their reach to communities worldwide, and undertaking more extensive projects.

In concluding the evaluation of food security versus food sovereignty and the roles of international organizations versus community based organizations, it becomes evident that both paradigms offer distinct approaches to addressing global food challenges. While food security emphasizes access to sufficient and nutritious food for all, food sovereignty advocates for local control over food systems and resources. International organizations play a significant role in providing aid and implementing policies on a global scale, yet their approaches often lack cultural sensitivity and fail to fully engage local communities. In contrast, community based organizations prioritize grassroots initiatives and community empowerment, but may lack the resources and reach of their international counterparts. As we delve deeper into the roles of these organizations in the domain of food, it is essential to explore how their collaboration or divergence shapes food policies, programs, and outcomes, ultimately influencing the well-being of communities worldwide.

Analyzing the Benefits and Pitfalls of Food Based Initiatives – International Organizations versus Community Based Organizations

International Organizations

According to Lentz and Barrett (2008), the conversation around funding within food assistance programs is under debate today. The 2008 Lancet series estimates the cost of iron fortification and salt iodization for populations in need would be over one billion USD (Lentz

and Barrett, 2013). One of the main issues with directing funding towards these goals is Russia's war in Ukraine, as well as East Africa's status of recovery from COVID-19. In order to combat the issue of hunger and disruption of the food production chain, USAID announced the allocation of approximately 1.3 billion USD ("United States Provides Nearly $1.3 Billion, 2022). However, this funding is intended to only support emergency food and cash for families to purchase food, malnutrition screening for children and "peanut-based nutritional supplement," farming and agricultural support, and health support through clean water projects ("United States Provides Nearly $1.3 Billion, 2022). These programs do not stand to support the rising issue of micronutrient deficiencies, rather, they stand to support the important, but short term issue, of survival. The nutritional support provided will include a peanut-based supplement and Super Cereal Plus, "a corn-soya blend food supplement" ("United States Provides Nearly $1.3 Billion, 2022). While these supplements are meant to treat malnutrition, the caveat is seen in the accessibility of these supplements. As the peanut-based supplement will only be provided at clinics in remote areas and hospitals, there is the assumption that those residing in rural areas can physically travel to said clinics, let alone in-time to receive treatment before adverse side effects of malnutrition set-in. This is also assuming the clinics are provided sufficient amounts of supplements to treat the entirety of the population in need. These supplements are also only intended to be consumed by young children, leaving those outside of this demographic without additional and crucial nutritional supplements.

The primary foods provided from international food assistance programs include primarily sorghum, corn, and yellow split peas ("United States Provides Nearly $1.3 Billion, 2022 : Sharp, 1999). Sorghum is one of the most nutritious forms of grain, with it containing "4.4 milligrams of iron per 100 grams" of the grain (Rose, 2022). However, much like wheat and

barley, sorghum contains compounds known as phytates. These compounds have been shown to limit the absorption of iron significantly, with one study showing a 50 percent decrease in the absorption of three milligrams of iron from a wheat roll (Hallberg, 1987). While there are solutions to this, such as soaking the sorghum overnight, these solutions, as well as the inhibiting factors, are not common knowledge (Gupta, Gangoliya, et al., 2015). While researchers such as Pereira and Hawkes state that sorghum is "generally fermented" in Africa, they also acknowledge that this creates a trade-off as fermentation threatens other nutritional aspects such as "antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties" sorghum naturally contains (Pereira and Hawkes, 2022). This is a critical trade-off due to the long term benefits of the nutrients lost. Antioxidants, for example, have been shown to prevent cell damage from "free radicals," potentially protecting an individual from health issues such as heart disease and cancer (Antioxidants: In Depth, 2013). This creates a paradox where a population faces deficiencies regardless of whether sorghum is fermented or not.

Corn, or maize, has also been a major product within international food assistance programs for decades, and has also been at the center of major controversies. Looking first at the nutritional properties of corn, the product, like most, has both positive and negative impacts on the body. Corn, akin to sorghum, constitutes a grain, thus sharing comparable nutritional profiles. Rich in fiber, corn aids in reducing the risk of "heart disease, strokes, type 2 diabetes, and bowel cancer" (Why Sweetcorn is Good for You, 2020). However, an individual requires a daily intake of 25 to 30 grams a day, while corn only provides 2.4 grams of fiber per 100 grams (Why Sweetcorn is Good for You, 2020). This compounds the challenges faced by numerous East Africans, who already find it difficult to afford food for themselves and their families. However, consuming high amounts of corn can lead to adverse side effects, including, but not limited to:

pellagra, intestinal irritation and diarrhea, tooth decay, osteoporosis, and lethargy (Choudhary, 2022). Issues such as these are often causes of death for East African children who face micronutrient deficiencies. Adding these risks from a primarily corn based diet along with those of micronutrient deficiencies stands to put individuals at a higher risk of early mortality from treatable issues.

Corn has also been at the forefront of the largest controversies between food assistance programs and East African countries due to the frequency of genetic modification of the crop. One Ugandan lawmaker stated "We have to import planting material from abroad, from those who control the genes [.....] This is like handing ourselves to be slaves" (Schumacher, 2018). Concerns such as these have been around since the early 200s, with Zambia being one of the first countries in the region to restrict the distribution of food assistance that had been genetically modified. Today, the region is split, as Kenya lifted their ban of genetically modified crops in October due to the population facing their worst drought in 40 years (Winning, 2022). This comes at the same time as Burundi worries their borders are not properly equipped to keep genetically modified crops from entering the country (Havyarimana, 2022). This calls into question the frequency of consulting East Africans on their needs and the manner in which those needs should be and are being met.

Perhaps the most significant issue these nutritional statistics show is the lack of vitamin A and the prevalence of phytates in products food assistance programs provide to East Africa. Vitamin A deficiency is rare in developed countries; however, in African countries, children are at extremely high risk of death due to this deficiency, with an estimated 80,000 deaths yearly in Ethiopia due to vitamin A deficiency (Abrha, Girma, et al., 2016 : Streit, 2018).

Another chief concern in international aid is the way in which food aid is delivered to regions in need. As seen in the documentary "What are we doing here?," released in 2008, the distribution system for food aid, it is common for food to be airdropped from large airplanes in regions that are inaccessible by motor vehicle (Klein, B; et al., 2008). As these airdrops are conducted in planes, rather than helicopters, the altitude at which the food is released is still quite high. In "What are we doing here?," we see these bags explode up one hitting the ground due to the altitude at which they were released, as well as the sheer weight of the corn and fragility of the packaging (Klein, B; et. al., 2008). In the next scene, we see community members scrambling to salvage corn kernels from the dirt, ultimately abandoning much of the product, and walking away with contaminated food (Klein, B; et. al., 2008). Despite issues within the distribution system being known for decades, international organizations and governments continue to use airdropping as a method of distribution in areas deemed as high-risk or inaccessible by other means. While in rural areas of African countries, these issues mean a lack of food resources and potential starvation, in other areas, it can mean death for community members. In the case of aid airdrops in Gaza, five civilians were killed when the parachute failed to open and crashed into a crowd ("Aid airdrop kills five people," 2024). A separate airdrop resulted in the deaths of 12 people when the packages landed in the Mediterranean Sea, as civilians attempting to retrieve them drowned (Bigg, 2024). In an interview with National Public Radio (NPR), President of Refugees International and humanitarian aid worker Jeremy Konyndyk stated that airdrops are "probably the most inefficient possible way to deliver aid" (Burnett, et al., 2024). His reasoning behind this statement is that delivery by air is roughly "eight to 10 times" more expensive than delivery overland, while simultaneously providing a smaller quantity of aid (Burnett, et al., 2024).

However, what these programs truly lack is individual agency over the products available and consumed. As previously stated, representatives of communities "benefiting" from international organizations' food assistance programs have compared being forced into a position of dependence to feeling like "slaves" to these organizations (Schumacher, 2018). This sentiment underscores the profound issue of disempowerment and loss of autonomy experienced by the recipients. When individuals and communities are not actively involved in decisions regarding the types of food aid provided, they become passive recipients rather than active participants in their own food security. This lack of agency can lead to feelings of frustration, helplessness, and even resentment towards external aid providers. Additionally, it can perpetuate a cycle of dependency, where communities rely on external assistance rather than developing sustainable solutions to food insecurity. Furthermore, the absence of local input in food aid programs can result in mismatches between the assistance provided and the actual needs and preferences of the recipients. For example, if food aid consists primarily of products that are unfamiliar or culturally inappropriate, it may not be effectively utilized or accepted by the community members. Therefore, the issue goes beyond simply ensuring access to food; it encompasses the fundamental right of individuals and communities to make choices about the food they eat and produce. Ultimately, without meaningful participation and empowerment, food assistance programs risk undermining the dignity and self-determination of those they aim to serve.

Community Based Organizations

In analyzing organizations such as Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania (MVIWATA), or the National Networks of Farmers' Groups in Tanzania, their commitment to understanding the nuanced needs of local communities and meticulously planning for the

enduring impacts of their projects shines through in their annual reports and project publications (Environmental and Social Management Framework, 2023). A comprehensive project publication from MVIWATA in 2023 highlights their approach to bolstering food systems by prioritizing the empowerment of smallholder farmers (Environmental and Social Management Framework, 2023). Within this framework, emphasis is placed on equipping farmers with the requisite knowledge and skills in sustainable agricultural practices, encompassing soil conservation techniques, organic farming methodologies, and efficient pest and disease management strategies. Additionally, a key focus is placed on enhancing farmers' resilience to climate variability and change, acknowledging the profound impact of environmental factors and climate change on agricultural productivity and livelihoods in developing countries, specifically in rural areas. This holistic approach not only underscores community based organizations' profound understanding of the multifaceted challenges confronting agricultural communities, but also reflects their commitment to implementing and supporting tangible and sustainable improvements in developing food systems and rural livelihoods. Through targeted capacity-building initiatives and community-centric interventions, these organizations strive to empower farmers with the tools and resources necessary to navigate complex agricultural landscapes while fostering resilience and self-sufficiency.

Funding opportunities for community based organizations, specifically those labeled as "nonprofits," are significantly limited in comparison to international organizations. The main ways that these organizations are able to fund their projects and operations are through donations and grants. According to Foundation Group, there are over "10 million nonprofits and non-governmental organizations worldwide" (Reasonover, 2021). However, while countries like the United States uphold strict reporting standards for nonprofit organizations, many developing

nations lack comparable regulations or fail to rigorously enforce them. Consequently, the actual figure could be significantly higher in such regions. While there are numerous opportunities to apply for grant funding from governments, for-profit organizations, and private foundations, the sheer number of nonprofit and non-governmental organizations applying for these funding opportunities means that opportunities are limited and stringent. According to data collected from nonprofit self-reporting and raw data, the average "win rate" for applicants is between 10 and 30 percent (Smart Grants, 2022).

Receiving funding from individual donors is also not as lucrative a prospect as those available to international organizations for a multitude of reasons. Due to COVID-19, 75 percent of nonprofit organizations "reported their revenue streams and ability to fundraise were negatively impacted" (Anaza, et al., 2022). At the same time, the pandemic "exacerbated consumer demands for nonprofit services," leaving what funds these organizations did gain stretched to their limit (Anaza, et al., 2022). This has caused nonprofit organizations to reduce their annual operating budgets, sacrifice certain projects, and turn away those in need. Outside of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are consistent issues nonprofits face when relying on individual donors. Middle- and low-income donors are often inconsistent with their donations, reflecting the current economic climate of their geographic area and career path. Another issue comes from the risks of dependency. A nonprofit may rely heavily on one donor who donates "major gifts." In the case of organizations such as Precious Project, the majority of their annual donations comes from a single donor, giving one-million USD annually. In these scenarios, organizations must consider and prepare for a withdrawal of support from that specific donor more so than they do other donors. Finally, organizations must consider donor preferences. While a donor may consistently donate to organizations focused on food sovereignty, a change in priorities or

perspective on the individual level may cause said donor to redirect their money to organizations based on women's rights, health, or education.

In terms of aid, community based organizations take a drastically different approach to food than international organizations. Organizations such as Precious Project largely grow their own food, rather than procure food from outside their operating region. At both the site of Precious English Medium Primary School (PEMPS) and Precious Leaders Secondary School (PLSS), the organization maintains gardens or small farms. As of 2024, the gardens support 200 chickens and ducks, spinach, Chinese cabbage, kale, bananas, papayas, passion fruit, and several other crops (Sustainability, n.d.). The eggs, meat, and crops go to support both the children who attend one of the schools, those boarding at the facility, and the orphans supported by Precious Children's Home (Sustainability, n.d.). While Precious Project is a registered 501(c)(3) in the United States, it functions as a cooperative organization alongside a registered non-governmental organization in Tanzania. This collaboration functions with Precious Project United States advising and assisting Precious Project Tanzania, while the Tanzania branch has the ultimate authority to make final decisions in regard to the day-to-day operations of the facilities. Due to this, all crops grown on the farms, and meals served to the children are chosen by those who understand what is culturally and traditionally appropriate for the children of Nshupu, Tanzania. This is drastically different from the policies of international organizations, where local community members are allowed little to no say in the products provided. Additionally, Precious Project Tanzania is able to support sustainable agriculture in their surrounding community through a multitude of procedures they have emplaced. One of these procedures is the selling of excess crops to the local community. This action not only provides extra funding to continue

supporting the farms but also allows the organization to have a positive impact on food sovereignty in the region.

Moreover, the organization educates the children and community members about sustainable farming practices. In doing so, they are able to help increase the productivity of small shareholder farms throughout the village. However, as Precious Project practices permaculture and sustainable farming, they are also able to help create sustainable farms that protect and boost the local environment and climate, rather than exacerbating impacts of climate change in the region. The same educational component is seen in the projects emplaced by MVIWATA. At the center of MVIWATA's food systems support is the concept of strengthening and growing the capacity of local farmers through capacity building, in-depth training in "sustainable agricultural practices and techniques," and supporting "village land development and field expansion" (Environmental and Social Management Framework, 2023).

Perhaps the greatest advantage that community based organizations boast is found in the crops that their beneficiaries grow. By being able to grow, harvest, and ultimately consume a diverse crop yield, the beneficiaries of community based agriculture programs are able to avoid issues of malnutrition and develop their immune system and personal health in the long term. As previously mentioned, two of the main deficiencies found in East Africa are iron and vitamin A, both causing long term development and health issues, seen primarily in children and pregnant women. Looking back at the crops grown on the farms at Precious Project, we see that duck eggs and spinach are part of the yield, and therefore diet of the children, staff, and surrounding community. Based on the standard portion of duck eggs, one egg provides an individual 2.7 milligrams of iron (Current Dietary Guidelines, n.d.). One cup of cooked spinach provides 6.4 milligrams of iron (Current Dietary Guidelines, n.d.). These are two of the highest natural

sources of iron, with cooked spinach having the highest level of iron for vegetables (Current Dietary Guidelines, n.d.). In regard to fruits grown on the farms, recent studies evaluating natural treatments for iron deficiency found that avocados act as "an extremely helpful boost" (Avocados for Iron Deficiency?, 2017). Avocados provide 0.55 milligrams of iron in a 100 milligram portion size (Avocado, raw, 2020). The other major nutrient deficiency found in East African countries is related to vitamin A. Kale, grown on the Precious Project farms, provides 241 micrograms of vitamin A per 100 milligram serving (Kale, raw, 2019). Eggs are considered essential to a balanced diet, being a major "source of macro and micronutrients," due to their need to "support embryonic development until hatching" (Réhault-Godbert, et al., 2019). The egg yolk itself contains high levels of the following vitamins: A, D, E, K, B1, B2, B5, B6, B9, and B12 (Réhault-Godbert, et al., 2019).

An important theme seen with these initiatives is the relationship between community based organizations and local farmers. As observed during my time with the Hatima Institute International and Precious Project, these organizations do not wield authority as dictators but rather function as trusted advisors, fostering collaborative efforts and catalyzing positive changes within the farming community of their respective regions. Acting as advisors, these organizations play a multifaceted role, not only offering guidance in production techniques but also assuming the responsibility of educators, enlightening local farmers and communities about the pathways toward enhanced efficiency in agricultural practices. Through this partnership, they facilitate knowledge transfer, encourage innovation, and empower farmers to navigate challenges while harnessing the full potential of their resources.

The role of advisor is critical for two reasons. First, as advisors, community based organizations are able to introduce local farmers to techniques that they may not be familiar with.

As these organizations operate with a vast network, in comparison to that of an individual farmer, their intellectual resources are such that would otherwise be inaccessible or difficult to access by farmers, especially in rural communities. Additionally, acting as advisors, community based organizations play a pivotal role in giving agency and voice to marginalized individuals, countering the often disempowering effects of mass market interventions spearheaded by international organizations. This emphasis on agency lies at the heart of the food sovereignty movement, championing the autonomy and self-determination of local farmers and communities. By prioritizing agency, advisors empower communities to assert control over their food systems, aligning decisions with cultural values, ecological sustainability, and socioeconomic aspirations. This approach challenges top-down paradigms, fostering a more equitable distribution of power and resources while amplifying the voices of those typically sidelined in global food governance discussions.

Conclusion

The lack of individual agency is at the heart of the difference between food security and food sovereignty. Food security, often emphasized by international aid programs, focuses on ensuring access to food for all individuals. However, this approach frequently neglects the importance of self-determination and local control over food systems. In contrast, food sovereignty advocates for the right of communities to define their own food and agricultural policies, ensuring that they have the ability to produce, distribute, and consume food in a manner that aligns with their cultural, social, and environmental values (Patel, 2009).

By prioritizing food sovereignty over food security, communities can reclaim their agency and autonomy in food-related decision-making processes. This involves supporting local

food systems, promoting small-scale agriculture, and empowering communities to participate actively in shaping their food futures. Ultimately, the shift towards food sovereignty not only addresses immediate food needs but also fosters long term resilience and self-reliance within communities (McMichael, 2009).

When evaluating why organizations choose to pursue initiatives based on food security or food sovereignty, it is not as simple as choosing a label. As stated previously, each initiative has significant differences in areas of funding, community engagement and acceptance, nutritional security, and health and development in the short term and long term. This thesis displayed how, despite international organizations benefiting more directly from government funding, community based organizations who pursue the track of food sovereignty have a more significant and beneficial impact in the long term.

The discourse surrounding international aid programs in developing nations underscores the critical importance of community perception and involvement. While international organizations often emphasize quantitative impact assessments, the absence of community voices and participation in project implementation raises concerns about the sustainability and cultural appropriateness of interventions. This is particularly relevant in the context of food security, where the concept of food sovereignty challenges conventional approaches by advocating for community autonomy and control over food systems. La Via Campesina's advocacy for food sovereignty highlights the need for communities to define their own agricultural practices and dietary preferences within their cultural and ecological contexts. However, the conflation of food sovereignty with food security, compounded by external conservation agendas and reliance on commodity-based aid, poses challenges to local self-determination and sustainable development. Moreover, issues such as the distribution of genetically modified crops and inefficient delivery

methods further underscore the disconnect between international aid efforts and the needs of recipient communities. International organizations frequently prioritize addressing immediate issues of starvation rather than addressing the underlying problem of malnutrition, which can cause long term development issues. While emergency food aid programs are crucial for saving lives during crises, they often focus on providing basic sustenance rather than addressing the complex nutritional needs of communities. This short term approach may alleviate hunger in the immediate term but fails to address the root causes of malnutrition, such as inadequate access to diverse and nutritious foods, lack of education on proper nutrition, and socio-economic inequalities. Consequently, communities may remain trapped in a cycle of food insecurity and poverty, with detrimental effects on their health, education, and overall well-being. To achieve lasting solutions to food insecurity, international organizations must adopt holistic approaches that prioritize community empowerment, sustainable food production, and equitable access to nutritious foods. By actively involving communities in decision-making processes and supporting initiatives that promote food sovereignty, international aid programs can contribute to building resilient food systems that empower individuals and communities to thrive in the long term.

Meanwhile, community based organizations play a pivotal role in supporting food sovereignty by prioritizing local engagement, sustainable agriculture, and community empowerment. By involving the community in project implementation and decision-making processes, these organizations ensure that initiatives align with the genuine needs and cultural preferences of the people they serve. Through sustainable farming practices and capacity-building efforts, such as those exemplified by Precious Project and MVIWATA, community based organizations not only address immediate food security concerns but also

foster long term resilience and self-sufficiency within communities. Moreover, by growing diverse crops and educating beneficiaries about nutrition and sustainable farming, these organizations contribute to combating malnutrition and promoting personal health. In essence, community based organizations stand as champions of food sovereignty, empowering communities to take control of their food systems and shape a sustainable future for generations to come.

In emergency situations, where short term relief is what is needed, international organizations are more likely to be beneficial to the communities due to the extensive funding and resources they are able to utilize and provide to communities. However, even these short term solutions can have long lasting consequences. For this reason, it is crucial that, in issues of mass starvation and malnutrition, community based organizations are able to take the lead in issues requiring long term support. As previously stated, major international organizations, including USAID and the FAO, currently maintain partnerships with community based organizations and nonprofits throughout the world. With this in mind, international organizations should conduct an overhaul of their policies with regard to their food security policies in order to ensure more beneficial results in the long term. This overhaul should shift the focus of their policies and initiatives to look at food sovereignty rather than food security. More importantly, this shift should also leave the overall design and implementation of said policies and initiatives to community based organizations they have partnered with. By acting as an advisor rather than director of initiatives, international organizations would be able to grant access to their vast funds and resources to community based organizations, and virtually eliminate long term disadvantages in the food and agricultural aid systems.

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