



Sustainability in Commitment

Alumni Conference
26 April to 29 April 2013

Report on Workshop B by Isaac Owusu: The Intercultural perspective in project management and development cooperation, hosted by Tzegha Kibrom and Lucia Muriel.

On Saturday April 27, we hosted a workshop on intercultural discussion as part of our Alumni conference in Berlin. The hosting of this workshop had become necessary in the sense that we needed a thorough self reflection on the progress of our current projects, assess our approaches to the so called partnership, finding various means and mechanisms to deal with the so called discrimination racist behaviors often subtle and taken for granted. It was our objective that we take key lessons from this workshop, applying them in the most appropriate ways for the progress and sustainability of our current and future projects in particular and our association in general.

Participants had the option of choosing between which work shops to attend. However, this was a low moment for which I am personally critical of. Having the option to choose was going to exclude participants from benefiting from key intercultural reflective moments critical to the harmonious existence of our association. Nevertheless, those of us who opted for this option had very fruitful deliberations. The discussion were deep and personal and strictly under closed doors. It is for this reason that we were not represented in most of the already shared videos. We chose this option because we wanted to respect personal spaces and avoid the possibility of offense and more importantly provide the best comfortable environment for such purposes. As agreed from our discussions, I am not permitted to vividly discuss individual concerns and also for the lack of space. However, collectively and with a common consensus, we identified and proposed five (5) key areas for considerations;

1 Intercultural Training is a 'life skill'

We believe that it is key and very fundamental for every member of our alumni and for that matter all associates to at least, get basic training in intercultural matters. For current alumni, we proposed strongly that future workshop on intercultural training/matters be made obligatory and not optional. Additionally, we also proposed online webinar /platforms on this topic for all alumni, encouraging them for active participation. Regarding future GAGG programs, it is our recommendation that manuals on building intercultural competences be sent out to successfully selected participants in advance, at least two weeks before the start of the first leg in Germany. Furthermore, we suggest that the first two days of the program in Germany, be dedicated exclusively, if possible to intercultural workshops for participants. We believe that this is critical to the continuous progress of our association therefore we must avoid being complacent about it.

2. Understanding & awareness creation of cultural diversity

Though much related to intercultural competencies, we have chosen to treat it as



distinct in its own. We need to be guided and remembered constantly by the fact that even though we share common aspirations and goals, we are unique and culturally diverse. We must respect the cultural sanctity of each member, avoid unnecessary stereotyping, and commit to embracing cultural diversity.

3. The Power of words

We realized that very often we unconsciously make 'loose comments' and take them for granted their implications. The latest being certain unfortunate random comments made by some participants in the just ended alumni conference. We are by this, in no way trying to prevent people from sharing their views or opinions about events. We are all free and welcomed to do that, however we must be aware of the cultural sensitivity of our group and be cautious of what we say and how we say them. It is often said that our tongues contain no bones yet stronger to break the toughest bone. Let's be guided by this.

4. Dynamism in development (Project Implementations)

We realized how difficult and herculean task it is when we have a 'country vrs a continent situation'. It is essential that we see Africa as a continent and not as a country. Implementation of projects in Africa must not be done with same approaches but dynamically according to conditions situations in each country. For instance strategies for project implementation in the Southern part of Africa, to a large extent may not necessarily work in the West. We share common peculiarities but different in many diverse ways. The phrase 'Go...AFRICA... GO...GERMANY is suggestive enough of our concerns. Many have suggested a change to the name and we welcome new ideas on this.

5. Roles for Contribution/ Procedures

We realized from our deliberations that we need to redefine and conceptualize our framework of partnership. A partnership will normally involve equal active participation between parties involved. We feel the current framework of partnership is too Eurocentric to a large extent. We believe that program participants are selected from large pools of applications based on their competencies and abilities to make meaningful contributions to future events; therefore it is essential that African alumni in their respective regions are given the chance to contribute in organizing the African version of future GAGG, instead of 'exporting' so called expatriates for same purposes.

The result of these practices makes most African participants feel excluded and alienated from GOAL activities. The key to activating 'dormant' African participants will be to integrate them fully into various roles within their regions.

In the end all we can say is that we are still in the initial stages of gathering ideas and inputs on interculturality and how best we can appropriately infuse them into our current and future activities. We welcome new suggestions, ideas and recommendations you may want to share with us.