Achieving food security for university students through stakeholder joint participation

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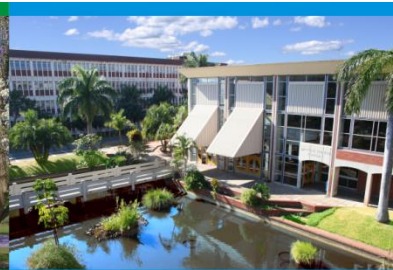
EDGEWOOD CAMPUS   HOWARD COLLEGE CAMPUS   NELSON R MANDELA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE   PIETERMARITZBURG CAMPUS   WESTVILLE CAMPUS

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Background of research problem

- Definition of food security by FAO, 2002 " A status when All people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy and active lifestyle." [1]
- South Africa has national food secure status, but not household and individual – individuals include University students
  - Important element of Urban Food Insecurity and Hidden Hunger
- Food insecurity linked to socio-economic background & student baggage[2]
  - Including income, and large dependency on Government grants
- Lack of brain fuel
  - Affects concentration and ultimately performance
  - Less than ¼ students complete degrees in prescribed timeframe
- 50-60% students drop out during first year of study
  - Finance issues, inadequate food or poverty
  - Negative impact on graduation rates, throughputs, and finances spent on unsuccessful students trapped in the system ----$\rightarrow$ negative economic impacts
- Not a new problem. However, it is not openly discussed especially at Leadership levels
- How can the University Community, along with relevant stakeholders engage in addressing food insecurity?

[1] http://www.thejournalist.org.za/kau-kauru/hungry-students-a-public-health-crisis
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION. (2002) *The State of Food Insecurity in the World*. Rome: FAO.

[2]CHAPARRO, M. P., ZAGHLOUL S. S., HOLCK P & DOBBS J. (2009) Food Insecurity prevalence among college students at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. *Public Health Nutrition*, 12: 2097-2103.

Previous Findings from Gwacela, 2013 (UKZN)

- Sample N=91 (College of Agricultural Science)
- 53% low socio-economic background (dependency on income grant)
- Lack of funding/bursaries & loans

Undergraduate students (mostly females from data)

20% send home remittances to support families (deviation from food budget)

Insufficient National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)
- R628.25 = R21 per day for meals

Food Insecurity Access Scale
- 80% Anxiety & uncertainty re: next meal
- Residence students more susceptible
- Storage facilities (communal contribute to theft).

Lack grocery and financial management skills
- Affordability challenges

Individual Dietary Diversity Score
- Starchy foods (pap, bread & cereals)
- Fewer vegetables and fruits
- Cost and filling factor consideration

Impact on micronutrients and ultimate health status.

Objective of study

- Can Universities feed their own students?
  - Without deviation from core functions?
- To assess the feasibility of decreasing student food insecurity through stakeholder engagement
  - Feasibility of formulating a Foodbank structure (through engagements)
  - Participation of University Community
  - Nearby Supermarkets (businesses)
    - Willingness to participate
  - Successful community engagement from the two parties

* Nearby Grocery stores

* Businesses

*University Community

*Clubs & societies
*Student Support
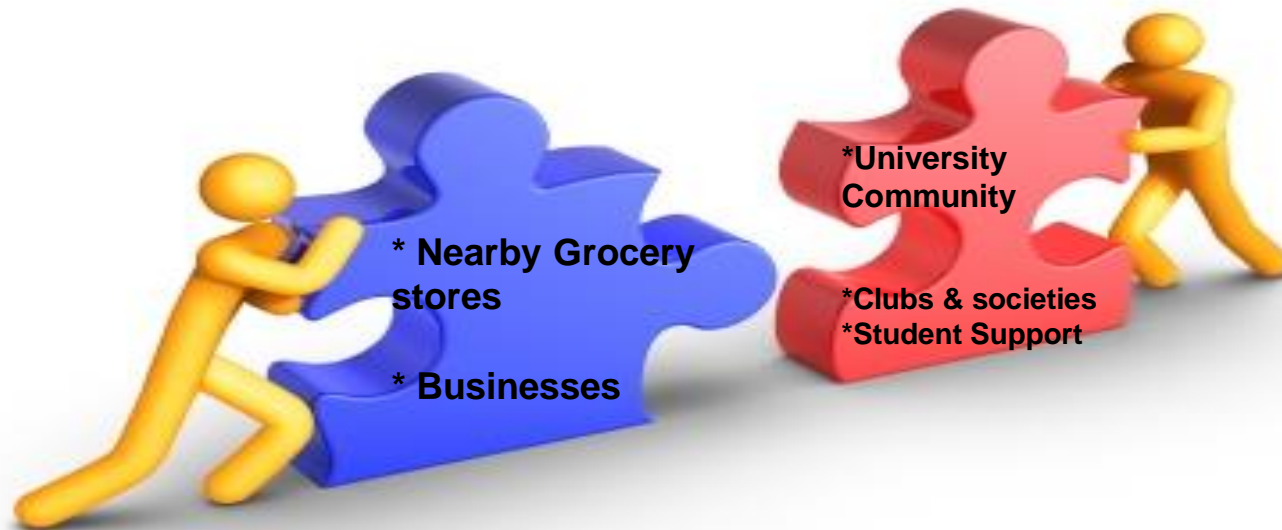
Importance of stakeholder engagement / community engagement

- Definition: planned process which encompasses a wide variety of government & community members in the decision-making process.
- Involves active participation (formal, informal, direct or indirect)
- Citizens shape decisions, policy and programs which affect them
- Proposing for meaningful stakeholder (student & University community) engagement with local businesses for sustainable and meaningful Community Social Responsibility
  - Moving beyond philanthropy to integrating social & community concerns into business planning
  - Move beyond ad-hoc and limited effectiveness to sustainable and meaningful
  - Partnership perspective
- Begins with concerned communities, willing businesses that acknowledge community's impact on a macro economic scale.
- General proximity to malls and shopping centres.

Proposed study sites

- University of KwaZulu-Natal
- University of Zululand
- University of Free State
  - Assess existing structures for managing food (e.g. cafeteria, coupon system, donations)
  - Effectiveness of intervention
  - Best-practices & lessons learned

Proposed solution to the problem

- University Community and relevant stakeholders
  - Clubs & societies, University Departments (Student Support), nearby supermarkets & NGO's
- FoodBank (similar to FoodBankSA structure)
  - Non-profit, charitable organization that distribute food to food insecure individuals to avoid hunger
  - Collect, sort and quality review
  - Warehouse model (storage and distribution centre for smaller agencies)
  - Food closets (can include Universities), soup kitchens, homeless shelter, old age homes and schools

Why Foodbank as a solution?

- 1/3rd of food produced in SA ends up in landfills as wastage (Foodbank SA, 2014)
- More than 12 million or 1 in every 4 people go to bed without food
- The cost of an average basket of food products went up from just over R1,500 to R1,640 rand in September 2014 (Pacsa, 2014)
  - As food becomes more and more expensive, people opt for cheaper foods.
  - The saving of food prevents millions of tons of perfectly edible food from going to waste
  - In 2014, 3 800 000 kg of food was saved
  - 4.3 million kg collected food (donations from supermarkets, shops etc.)

Can Foodbanks work in University settings?

- Students known to survive on less than nutritious food (due to food prices)
- Universities worldwide experience growing trend of hungry students at times asking lecturers for food Food Closet launch in San Diego City University[1]
  - UCLA Food Closet Program in University of California
  - Stop Hunger Now initiative (UJ initiative providing 7128 meals per week to 4 campuses[2] (donations based)
  - Gift of the Givers food parcel in UKZN, Pietermaritzburg Campus
    - Donations, unsustainable, poor marketing.
- Response to most students surviving on one meal per day
- Projects supported by charitable donations
- Negative stigma challenges
  - "Poverty" and "poor" stigma
  - Possibly addressed through increasing awareness to change perceptions

1 ROBBINS, K. (2010). Among dorms and dining halls, hidden hunger. *The Atlantic,* 4 May 2010.
2 http://www.stophungernowsa.org/index.php/success-story-photo-journal

- Campus societies are effective student organizations/ clubs/ societies
  - UCT has over 100 clubs & societies alone!
  - NMMU has over 30
  - WITS University has a club designated for Corporate Social Responsibility

- Formulate Food Closet or FoodBank programs as registered club/society
  - Through engagement with nearby Supermarkets
  - Near sell-by date goods,
  - Collection, storage and distribution centers on Campus
  - Incorporate appealing programs such as competitions where high achievers can win a month's groceries.

- Businesses that are in close proximity to Universities such as grocery stores rely on University community for support. Through engagements and tailored CSR, food insecurity amongst students can be addressed in sustainable ways.

Anticipated outcomes & conclusion

- Engagement of University community (student clubs & society and Student Support Structures
    - Advocate for meaningful & sustainable Community Social Responsibility project
- Saving food through organised saving / procurement
    - Less food wastage in a Country that is food insecure, with students in need.
- Cheaper meals for students inclusive of necessary nutrients & vitamins
- Fewer students worrying about food accessibility rather than their studies.
    - Food basket having variety of foods.