

# Case: LL Uganda Permaculture Consortium

How to upscale the impact and work of the Ghetto Research Lab with limited resources and how to foster deeper bonds of collaboration and commitment amongst community members?



24 January 2024

## Case description

- The Ghetto Research Lab (2018) is a project co-run by the Uganda Permaculture Consortium and is located in Kumpala, Uganda. It focuses on **community-based solutions** for **vulnerable communities**.
- The slum **faces complex problems**, such as food insecurity & malnutrition, lack of agricultural knowledge, contamination of soil and floodings, inadequate waste management and sanitation, crime and conflict (high unemployment and gender inequality)
- The community is characterized by a lack of unity and cooperation due to social trauma, cultural backgrounds, differing political viewpoints and gender inequality.
- The Living Lab needs to be profitable to get funding to scale up the operations and community members have a high expectation of activities being profitable. Affiliates of the lab distanced themselves to gain their own profit, hence there is a lack of commitment of the people living in the area. Even though they participated in workshops of the Living Lab, they do not see hope in the projects and they have other priorities.

## Take-home lessons

- There is a lack of resources and skills to upscale the operations of the Ghetto Research Lab, yet there is an entrepreneurial spirit present in the Ghetto Research Lab, resulting in various Ghetto Lab Solutions on waste-management practices:
  - use of plastic waste from the so called "trash mountains" found in the slums. The "waste" is used for recycling/upcycling projects, such as the building of sanitary toilets in the slum.
  - compost used for vertical urban farming, increasing local food production against hunger in the slums and regenerative farming practices (e.g. various vegetables, mushrooms and fish farming in ponds)
  - Educational aspects with youth and children on water and sanitary hygiene (WASH)
  - Social and Mental Health projects for e.g. refugees in the slum.
- A lot is created out of good will, but the expertise that could manage such complexities is not prone to come down to the slum. There is a lack of managing the resources and professionalism, which is a barrier when it comes to leaving the Lab to function by itself and to **create a culture of ownership and initiation**  
**To involve more communities members for long term commitment requires a reward system (e.g. local veggies from the urban farming practices to be taken home by community members)**
- Even though a lot of community empowerment in the Living Lab can happen through youth, there is a social stigma towards the Ghetto Youth, making collaborations with the government hard and tiresome.
- The next steps in the project are 1) analysis of the needs and concerns of the communities in the slum (interviews and field visits are in process), 2) creating a multistakeholder network around the project to find mutual benefits and upscale activities. It is important to look more into the translocal networks (e.g. local organizations and governmental bodies)
- In the long-run, the overarching goal of the Ghetto Lab is to create a holistic project design together with the community: one that tackles different problems (social, health, sustainability) for **win-win solutions**
- Geoffrey asked the following questions to the group: Are **there any theories I can have a look at to upscale the activities and do you know ways on how to change the behaviour of community members that get less motivated to partake in the Ghetto Research Lab?**

## Discussion

- Rosina comments: We are now in a similar project called FoodCLIC on co-designing real-life interventions with the community. On how to get people engaged: it is important to be transparent on where you are heading to with the project, so in every mail we send out to the people involved in the project, we are telling them that they are becoming part of this network and that there will be funding for the interventions that we choose together and jointly explore other possibilities in funding and finding political support.
- Geoffrey responds: It is indeed important to collaborate with politicians, but the government in Uganda is not really connected to the realities of the slum, which makes it hard for them to comprehend what is going on.
- Dirk mentions: A slum of that size is an extreme challenge compared to the environment of other LLs. I think the issue is that the government is overwhelmed by the complexity of the problems and do not know how to tackle them. Niche innovations within the slum can be inspiring examples that give politicians more understanding on how to tackle these challenges on a local level.
- Geoffrey adds: The Living Lab is very motivated to giving solutions to the government and other stakeholders. It's important that the government looks at what is happening. Young artists and musicians that are active in the LL play a role in reaching a wider audience.
- Livia asks: What are the alliances you work with? And what about the feasibility of motivating students (economics, sustainable development, cultural anthropology) to get involved with the project to help designing a feasible project design?
- Geoffrey: We have a good niche network of permaculture practitioners that have knowledge on soil management and vertical farming. So, there is a multi-stakeholder in local contexts to tackle green transformation in the broadest sense. We need a higher reach of stakeholders to upscale the operations, so I think it is also a very good idea to involve students.
- Livia: What about gender inequality in the slum and how is the church's involvement with gender issues?
- Geoffrey: It's a big issue and women have a harsher life in the slum than men. Women are not allowed by men to go to LL activities by themselves, which makes it hard to engage more women. We have been thinking of the compounds of churches (green spaces for farming). Church has a lot of influence and is a powerful institution in Uganda, but does not play an active role in combatting gender inequality within this specific context
- Aleksandra adds: There is a Dutch organisation called Church of Climate Change that leads projects in various African countries to tackle climate injustices, so might be interesting for you to connect with. Also, there are organisations for women entrepreneurship that could help close the gender gap.
- Rosalina: On how to keep the engagement with the community; our Living Lab works with vulnerable communities and measures the impact of the interventions. If they see the impact and when you tackle more issues at the same time, they are more motivated. For example, connecting farmers with schools by providing the vegetables to students to create more of a community feeling.
- Geoffrey: Good example, this creates hope and commitment, as they see that there is a benefit of an intervention.
- Dirk: To respond to your question on theories to have an influence on community behaviour, you can look at the Theory of Change that aids in designing real life interventions for positive changes in behaviour.

## Attendees

Geoffrey Kwala, Uganda Permaculture Consortium  
Rosalina Malagrida, IrisCaixa  
Livia Cepoiu, RCE Graz - Styria  
Dirk Wascher, SusMetro  
Aleksandra Jovanovic, SusMetro

## Further reading/Annex

- Theory of Change: <https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>
- Church of Climate Change: <https://churchofclimatechange.org/>

## Next CoP events

20 March 2024

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