

Bee the Solution - Newsletter 9, July 2017

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PROJECTS DETAILS

More details on Projects are available on Bee the Solution website @ www.projects.beethesolution.org

Each post is a short story about the people, how we came across each other, the seed of the projects... as we grow with the projects, more and more details will be added.

Also browse the website www.beethesolution.org for more information.

FEATURE OF THE MONTH

[Be grateful for what you have...](#)

... not longing for what you don't.

This might sound cheesy, one of those saying that we know but don't really pay attention to. One that we tell the kids to keep them quiet when they want something and we don't want to get it/buy it for them.

But this is so true in everyday life. As I do move a lot, I do meet a lot of people from different background and with different conditions of life. And people reactions to what they have do vary a lot. It is interesting that there is no general rule per say according to background. It is more a personal attitude. Some people are grateful for little things, some people complain for more and/or bigger, no matter how big a thing they just got. But still, a general rule is "the more you get/have, the more you want"... this might be inherent to human nature... we can be contempt with little, yet, as soon as we get something, we expect more...

I have seen people being grateful for an empty plastic bottle or people not having enough with being given 100 Litres of water... In general, the more you give, the more people expect. Another cheesy saying: "give him a hand and he want an arm". I have found that people are happier to receive small things, even if only kindness, than bigger things that then call for more and leave a feeling of frustration.

Even for me, while I do have everything I need, there are some days/time where I long for more. A better kitchen, running water, bread... Yet I am happy with what I have. And I am grateful for what I get along the way - even if not my favourite things... and to start with, I am grateful for being here... I am grateful for a smiling face, someone being happy about something you just did or said... I am grateful that I have a roof, that I have food... Yes, I do have my frustrations - when something does not work, when something is broken or get missing (forgotten somewhere, lost or stolen...), when someone mistreat you. But at the end of the day, I look at what I do have, at people around me, at time when things do work (eventually it will work) and I am grateful for it.

This post was prompted by a couple of events recently and then I thought about one of my first [post](#) on the blog, nearly 2 years ago, which was a different way of looking at gratitude for what we have, and how our perspective can change. Interestingly, things have not really changed: I still long for the same things, and I am still grateful for the same... how do I reconcile looking at gratitude when talking about luxury and small pleasures? Because whatever we have we can be grateful for - only if we don't wish for what we don't have...

But then, this does not mean that we can't want more and still be grateful... found out more in our next newsletter... (NB - this does not apply to the minimum needed for survival...)

[CBO Challenge: Good Will and Effort](#)

Money is always an issue... regardless of the scale of an NGO, money is one of the sore point (well, the same goes for everything we do...). So whether we are talking of a big-recognised-international NGO, a small-new-local NGO/CBO, or anything in between, access to funding is a necessity.

But not for everything... one of the common attitude that I have encountered is that a lot of people are expecting money to come their way for a project to improve their conditions, especially coming from Westerners.

I believe that this is unfortunately an attitude that we have fostered over time by “just giving”. We see a need, we devise a solution, we come and build something or give something and then we go. As I mentioned in another [article](#), local people do not necessary see it as their project or their building. Once the NGO is gone, they do not necessarily continue the work, maintain the facilities or even use them. Or they don't know how to maintain or repair. And the downside is that they just come to expect that when things are going down, a NGO (the same or another) will come and fix it again or start over again.

Part of our vision is that people can actually do a lot themselves. They can learn what they don't know, but in many instances, people do know... they often lack the good will and the motivation for effort... they do not see their capabilities/potential. Somehow, this is also just going the “easy way”: if I wait long enough, someone will do it...

And we are trying to educate them on ownership of their project (and possibly their future), on taking actions and responsibilities for making things happen. Money is not all that is needed to start changing things. No matter how much money we can bring, if there is no good will and effort, there is no long term success. And it starts with getting this concept across: help yourself to grow.

This is a change in what people have been used to so far - and it does take time for people to grasp the idea that they can actually do something themselves. But I can start to see the changes. That people are getting things into their hands. That they start to work on a solution with what they have. Slowly but surely, motivation and confidence are finding their ways and local projects can be locally owned. At individual or community level.

For me, this is maybe the biggest challenge that some local communities or individuals (whether coming together as CBOs or not) do face: getting things into their own hands, relying on themselves rather than others in achieving changes in their conditions... And this is in turn the biggest work that we are trying to achieve: getting people to own their conditions, even in less affluent settings.

Disclaimer: this is not true for all... a lot of communities or individuals have come together as CBOs and rely on themselves, achieving a lot through their efforts - but some that we are helping are those who are struggling to see this side of (self)help - hence why we only talk about it and not the successful ones that we did/do not help... Also, this does not take into account those that we start helping and are willing... this is the other side of the coin only...

[Why do we need to be on the ground? Part 4 - Communication](#)

Beside [lines of communications](#), another aspect of communicating is linked to verbal and non-verbal expressions.

On the verbal communication, the language that I communicate with is English (all countries I am going to are English-speaking countries). While English is the official language, very few people speak English as their native language... and there is a multitude of different languages...

So, we have a lot of different accents, expressions (translation of local expressions) that can make the English language more difficult to understand. How we learn English also has an influence on communication.

I was fortunate to learn English in England and while I am now fluent and do speak a fairly good English, I will never have the level of a native speaker... However, I have still learnt English in England.

There are sometimes expressions that are not natural to understand in a given country/region. And it is only the recurring exposure to it that allows a foreigner (regardless of home language) to understand. I have talked about my favourite one in a completely unrelated [post](#) (regarding time...), about expression of "urgency" in doing something. You need to be on the ground to understand it fully...

There are a number of other expressions or use of language that are disturbing at first. To start with, it gives the impression that the person you are talking to does not master the language. Or that they make a demand where they should not (but should rather make a request). Or that they are being rude. But then, exposure to others and immersion in the country show you that this is just the way in that area.

However, some are also individual ways, that you learn by being with people for a while. And so you adapt to how people express themselves. Those subtle ways cannot be learnt via remote communication. They come with experience of the other. And often includes the non-verbal communication that we miss when discussing online. Again, this is linking back to what I was saying in another [post](#), and we experience the same with any one we communicate with... wherever we are and whatever we do...

It might be me, but cultures, history and personalities can be widely different from one village to the next. And my best way of learning people is to meet them in person. From there, the online communication will be easier to understand.

As an illustration, those are some expressions with which I had troubles at first, but that I have learnt to integrate in my "understanding" vocabulary:

Learn me = teach me

Borrow me = lend me

You should/must give me = please can you give me (I still struggle to understand it as a request and not a demand...)

Maybe you can = please can you (again, this one is sometimes difficult to understand as a request... but it all depends on who is making the request and how we learn to understand them and their expectations...)

His father is late = his father is deceased

Just now = later (see more on this one [here](#))

[Internet - How can we make small savings](#)

We try to minimise all our expenses. And one of the most obvious way is the accommodation set-up: camping is always the cheaper option compared to a room. But there are many other little things that we are trying to do on a daily basis, depending on the place we are.

Internet is one expense that we do juggle with for cost. Some countries are more expensive than others and we look at the different options and adapt to them.

One thing that this exercise has taught us (or at least really showed us...) is that we use more and more data. As soon as you connect your phone, tablet, computer, there are background checks etc that start using your data. Then pictures, website browsing, maintenance of the websites, posting for the blog and websites - all small things that do add up. In many places we have unlimited (or at least high cap) internet at home and then another contract on the cellphone. For me here, everything is through the cellphone and I juggle with expenses in general anyway, so I am more careful with everything.

I have learned to save the pages I want to read so that I do not spend too long online. I have learned to only go to check what I need to check. And I have learned to check my data usage and “centralise” internet connection.

In some place, you can get free wifi, such as Mc Donalds, KFC, coffee shop.... I do sometimes go, but you can't really sit there for the whole day so you learn faster and more efficient ways to surf the net. And I do see the difference when I can sit the whole day: I then get lost in looking at pages after pages - spending more time, but not necessarily getting more for my needs. The needs because leisure, nice to have. So sometimes, not having full internet saves us money **and** time :)

On a practical example: in Zimbabwe, 1 Go of data cost \$35 for 1 month. We use that just to post the newsletters... But we can buy 2 Go, valid for 1 day, for \$3.... so we just make sure that during that day we make the most of our connection. We use it post the newsletters, blog post, check information online, save articles for offline reading, etc... And then we can use the rest for more leisurely browsing, Facebook, You Tube, etc...

Sometimes, there are also internet shops. And it is “cheap”: generally \$1 per hour. But I tell you... when you are not online all the time, 1 hour goes really fast... and for example, posting the newsletters (it is 2 of them each time, French and English) takes 6-7 hours because a lot of the formatting can only be done online and links can only be added once everything is done online... and internet is not so fast... - so the cost of posting would be too high to use internet shops...

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Find all our newsletters in pdf format @ www.newsletter.beethesolution.org

To make sure that you receive our monthly newsletter, sign up on the website, for the English and/or the French edition: www.newsletter.beethesolution.org

FEEDBACK

Please do not hesitate to contact us @ info@beethesolution.org.

Feel free to send us feedback. We are open to suggestions and comments. As we are still young and learning, we value your opinion even more than usual and are very grateful for it.

Let us know about what you want to see in the Newsletter, which projects you are interested in, any ideas you have for a project.

Have a safe month ahead

Chrystel, (Maya), Odile, H  l  ne and Jean-Louis