

**A REPORT ON PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING  
FOR EMERGING CHANGEMAKERS  
IN THE  
UNIVERSITY OF BERN, SWITZERLAND**

*FROM*

*27TH JULY – 18TH AUGUST 2013*



**ATTENDED BY: WIRSIY EMMANUEL BINYUY**

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**ORGANISER: GLOBAL DIVERSITY FOUNDATION**

*UNDER*

**GLOBALENVIRONMENT SUMMER ACADEMY (GESA)**

**FUNDED BY: NEW ENGLAND BIOLABS FOUNDATION (NEBF)**

*Report prepared by Wirsiy EmmanuelBinyuy*

## **INTRODUCTION**

WIRSIY Emmanuel Binyuy, an environmentalist working in Cameroon Gender and Environment Watch (CAMGEW) attended a capacity building course under Global Environment Summer Academy (GESA) of Global Diversity Foundation in the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Bern, Switzerland. GESA takes place annually to broaden and deepen the knowledge, networking and communication of postgraduates and midterm professionals. This program was aimed at promoting peer-to-peer learning for emerging change makers and involved 18 young people from different countries and different backgrounds. Young students and professionals from around the world were trained to be future environmental leaders in the academics, civil society organizations, private sector and government institutions. This was a rich course that developed our critical thinking minds in promoting equity, social justice and ecological sustainability. GESA spanned local to global scales and diverse ecosystems, exploring the most critical contemporary environmental issues from multiple perspectives including biocultural diversity, environmental history, political ecology, sustainability studies and personal activism.

The course took place from the 27<sup>th</sup> July to 18<sup>th</sup> August 2013. Wirsiy Emmanuel had support from New England Biolabs Foundation (NEBF) to cover his air transport, local cost for visa application and part of living expenses in Switzerland worth US\$ 1800. Emmanuel also received support from Global Diversity Foundation to cover living expenses, tuition and accommodation cost for the course. Emmanuel and the CAMGEW team are very grateful to NEBF and Global Diversity Foundation for giving them the opportunity to build his capacity and that of CAMGEW. This knowledge and skills obtained will be used to serve humanity and protect our mother-earth for ourselves and posterity.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This course took place for 3 weeks. The activities ranged from roundtable discussions, small group discussion, field trips, outdoor learning, practical work in the field, presentation of individual work by participants, reflection by course participants on how to be change makers and innovators in their various works, creative preludes, short exercises and ethno-botany breaks. A typical day started at 9:00 am with physical exercise, creative prelude by a participant on any educative issue in the form of video, sketch, dance, story, etc and then continued with lessons. By midday there was ethno-botany break where each participant was

given the opportunity to showcase and share something edible from his/her region with other participants, facilitators and trainers. After this break, lessons continued till lunch time. After lunch, lessons continued till 5:00 pm when participants went back to student hostels to rest till 8:00 pm when small group discussions were done in hostels on some issues arising from the day's discussions. There was a mid-term evaluation of course at the early period of the second week and end of course evaluation at the last day of the course. Resource persons were given about 30 minutes to present their topics and after that the floor was open for discussions and questions. Activities were carried out for three weeks with different resource persons.

## **COURSE ACTIVITIES**

### **WEEK ONE**

The first three days of the first week were dedicated to nurture innovation and creation of acquaintance between resource persons, facilitators and participants in the country side of Switzerland called Kandersteg. Participants had a deep reflection on their vision in life, how they could bring change in their careers and institutions to get adaptable solutions to the world's crises of poverty, energy, climate change and economy. Emmanuel reflected on how he could make himself a change maker and how to make CAMGEW better serve communities and better protect the environment. He spend time reflecting on how to take the growing CAMGEW to the next level with reputation. This reflection was really useful as it gave a break to Emmanuel's work and gave him an opportunity to have a deep thought on what he wants in life and how it would be useful to him, humanity and environment. During this period additional activities like visiting the Alps and pine forest were carried out. Week one ended with participants presenting their works and receiving lessons on communication skills, video workshop practical training and field lessons in an organic farm.



*Emmanuel with other GESA participants at Kandersteg on reflection*



*Participants sharing their professional lives with others*

## **WEEK TWO**

In the second week, we had lessons on the following topics:

- Ecological Knowledge, Practice and Institutions: Do IPLCs Optimize Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services?
- Socio-ecological Resilience, Biocultural Diversity and Scale: Can Community Action Resolve the Planetary Crisis?
- The Politics of Difference: Class, Gender and Race in Environmental Movements
- Green Economy, Sustainable Use and Livelihoods;
- Biodiversity Conservation, Extractive Industries and Environmental Justice;

- Policy panel discussion: Energy, Ethics and the Environment: Are biofuels and other renewables the solution?

### **WEEK THREE**

The third week had the following activities:

- Collaborative initiative sessions;
- Stewarding agro-pastoral landscapes: Histories, Policy, Practice and Future Prospects;
- Religion, Environmental Movements and Spirituality;
- Resources, Territory and Power;
- Methods, workshops and mapping. Participatory and ethnographic methods, etc;
- Global Environments Network and the Alumni Innovation Fund;
- Self-knowledge and Global Responsibility workshop and
- Global Action

Emmanuel participated in the ethnobotany break this week. He presented the Oku White Honey and honey juice. The course participants, facilitators and resource person shared in the eating of honey with bread and drinking honey juice. Emmanuel also shared to all persons in the course some Cameroon gifts. It was a great day that was labeled an African Day.

There was end of course evaluation that was verbal and written that looked at the courses successes, weak points and the way forward.



*Emmanuel leading the ethnobotanybreak putting on a hat*

### **QUESTIONS THAT NEEDED TO BE ANSWERED**

Emmanuel on participating in this course got answers to the questions below although he has continued to reflect on these issues.

- How can equity, justice and ecological sustainability be achieved?
- How can networks and federations help shape policies?
- How can citizens engage in direct policy making and direct democracy?
- How can the rights and interest of local people be protected and defended on access and use over land, water, forest and seeds?
- How can different laws be reinforced to end global crisis?
- Can community action resolve the planetary crises?
- How can consultation and compensation instruments help promote environmental justice?
- How can nature and environmental services be made alive than dead?

### **HOW WAS THE COURSE USEFUL**

Wirsiy Emmanuel found the course useful in the following ways:

- He learned new skills how to create networks with people and institutions that can help develop his communities and better protect the environment;
- He learned how to be a changemaker, leader and got skills on how to make institutions function better;
- He developed his critical thinking mind and learned how to argue constructively while covering all aspects relating to realities;
- He learned from other cultures and traditions different solutions to similar problems he faces as other participants and resource persons made presentations. This will help me better handle my own challenges in the field.
- He had the opportunity to meet other people working on similar issues like him. Together with these persons we will continue sharing information and learning from each other.
- He learned how to tackle issues integrating a global perspective that is acting locally while thinking globally. This will involve integrating social, cultural, economic, spiritual and environmental aspects.
- He was able to visit the UNESCO heritage site which is part of the city of Bern, he saw for the first time bears, glacier, alps and Paul Klee Museum

### **EMMANUEL'S CONTRIBUTION IN GESA**

GESA was an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning. Emmanuel contributed in this learning by sharing the work he has been doing in CAMGEW. This involved work on Oku community Forest regeneration with the planting of 16600 native trees of *Prunus africana*, bee farming, agroforestry and child development. Emmanuel took part in ethnobotany breaks to share with course participants, facilitators and resource persons a special type of honey produced from the Oku Community forest. The honey has a white colour with a strong aroma. Emmanuel also produced honey juice from this honey. Everyone in the course ate the honey with bread and drank the honey juice. It tasted quite different and delicious. Emmanuel also presented a local traditional dance for entertainment to all in the course and presented gifts from Cameroon to all present in the course. It was a great day that was labeled an African Day.

Emmanuel participated in course discussions by sharing local examples to support arguments. He also led sessions on NGO development and fund raising.





*Emmanuel present his activities to other course participants*



*Emmanuel contributing examples to support ongoing debate on biofuel and local livelihoods*

#### **HOW EMMANUEL WILL APPLY WHAT WAS LEARNED**

- The network created with persons and institutions will promote sharing of information and results to foster sustainable development;



- He learned much on new issues like green economy and he will use the Oku Community Radio to show how businesses could be carried out while keeping the environment healthy. This knowledge will be used in CAMGEW's child development project funded by NEBF to show children how to cultivate the soil in a way that it remains healthy while having enough food to sell and meet school needs
- He will organize small training workshops with office members to transfer the knowledge obtained to staff
- The critical thinking mind he has developed will help him write better, think well and talk better on environmental issues and issues that touch humanity.
- With skills obtained, Emmanuel hopes to be a model leader for the community and a servant of the people
- He is now part of the GESA alumni where he will share information and results of his work with others

## **CONCLUSION**

GESA was a great course that has made Emmanuel a change maker. It was an opportunity at a right time for Emmanuel to think of the way forward for himself and CAMGEW as a leader. GESA has consolidated Emmanuel's commitment in working for the environment and humanity. Emmanuel will remain forever grateful to the Director of New England Biolabs Foundation, Jessica Brown with the NEBF team and Global Diversity Foundation that made it possible for him to attend this course in 2013.



*GESA 2013 participants and facilitators join one of theirs- Rodriguez Mariana to say happy birthday during the course*