

My name is NKOMEJEGUSENGA Dieudonné, and I am from Rwanda. If one allows me I will expand on what the Competition meant to me. GLOBAL and DIVERSITY for me, are a bit the same and if one allows me to be philosophical, I will say there cannot be BEAUTY without DIVERSITY (obvious!!).

I take the liberty to express myself on this point because I think people generally do not appreciate at its right worth DIVERSITY; and on this I know much being from a country where this lack of appreciation reached a point where people's differences were perceived as a threat instead of being sources for strength; and this, combined with other important factors, sadly resulted in the Genocide against the Tutsis in 1994 in Rwanda. I won't speak on behalf of the Rwandan government but the understanding that the people (The human beings) are the real power has proven to be the right way and at the end of the day results are there to speak for themselves.

And I will try to make a connection between what I saw and learnt from the GEE 2009 and the above statements; in my team 31, we were 7 participants from 5 different nations (USA, New Zealand, France, Colombia and Rwanda). In team 31 we were 5 boys and 2 girls; blacks, whites and latinos were represented. Our respective countries were in 5 different time zones with time differences that could reach 12 hours; and we had to adapt to the fact that ordinary email communication was more practical than communication through the recommended Basecamp Software or through the Google Doc Robert had created for the team.

At the end of the competition team 31 presented a business concept on how to provide Colombian farmers with water supply solutions! If one considers the differences I enumerated in this paragraph and if one considers the challenges the team members had to deal with in order to spare some time to contribute ideas to the team's common cause (just a business concept!!), one may be willing to overlook my exaggerations in saying that I saw in what the team did more than just a six page business concept.

And indeed, my teammates Olga and Catalina had a very important and busy religious week, that precedes the Easter and had to travel back to their homes, and that week coincided with the final week of the competition (understandably the busiest thanks to overdue work, it happens all the time!!); during that same week Andrei had his examination period and a bit earlier, our team leader fell seriously ill while in Poland. In my own country Rwanda, the last week of the competition coincided with the annual weeklong mourning period and that is in part the reason I chose Diversity as the topic for my journal.

At the end of this competition and if one again allows me to be philosophical, I have had this questions about why we could write and agree within just three weeks on a concept despite our differences and challenges while 15 years ago (and since 1959) this basic appreciation and exploitation of people's diversity for better ends, lacked in my country leading to the loss of more than a million lives and to the devastation of the lives of many others now orphans and widows?

In our world that prides itself on his technological achievements, I was initiated from my first participation in a GEE competition on the importance of being AWARE and taking ownership of one's own destiny by duly exploiting available opportunities. In some countries this notion is well understood, taught and wisely used but in other parts of the world it's still darkness on why and how to attain this; my feeling is there are not enough GEE competitions to sow the right seeds.