

On October 21 at a sharing resources session at USD I had the good fortune of meeting and interviewing Doug Satre, director of the local NGO Plant With Purpose. What follows are Doug's comments, as close to verbatim as I could transcribe. I have not added my own thoughts.

When Doug started, they were already doing community-based projects on sustainable agriculture, conservation and water in Tanzania - particularly in the NE desert side - and in other places in Africa. A year after Doug joined the NGO, they began doing micro-finance as well. One year in, the program was not working so well, recipients were fearful and would hide when lenders came to town, so the NGO began looking at what CARE was doing with micro-savings in Niger.

Micro-savings projects quickly became very successful, and Doug speculates that it had something to do with differences between sharing resources laterally and receiving resources as top-down handouts. Sharing changed relationships between the NGO and community, and among community members with each other quite rapidly, and over time, quite profoundly. People came to discover their own gifts and talents in the course of deliberating together on the use of their collective savings.

Doug notes that it was the process of creating "buy in" among participants that made the project work.

Doug didn't differentiate his contributions in these realms, but focused on applying his gifts in all of them. His stick-to-it-tiveness. His ability to communicate. His technical skill.

The faith-based approach of Plant With Purpose, and conveying important messages to program participants about the dignity of human beings were core. The convergence of theology and philosophy that everyone is uniquely gifted. It was a process of partnering, not of humanitarianism.

For Doug it is all about "process", about getting people to recognize the dignity in communities, bringing that out. He finds that such self-knowledge is infectious, and tends to travel from community to community. Important to share stories and success in other communities to provide examples and stimulate hope.