

Africa's Place in Global Food Security

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As an economic and environmental geographer, I am concerned with the linkages between and relationships amongst economic development, natural resource use, and environmental justice. My dissertation research looks at how these far-reaching ideas intersect in the urban fishery systems of Mwanza, Tanzania.

Working in fisheries, a significant component of the problem manifests in the form of food insecurities. Food security is in itself a topic of immense complexity. As preparation for addressing this multifaceted topic and in advance of my upcoming primary fieldwork in Tanzania, I was lucky to be able to attend the 2012 Borlaug Summer Institute on Global Food Security on the campus of Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana.

The Summer Institute included numerous speakers from multiple universities and agencies. As part of this workshop, I was able to meet and discuss my ideas about my research with several

prominent scholars, including World Food Prize Laureate Gebisa Ejeta, Director of the USAID Office of Agricultural Research and Policy Rob Bertram, and Director General of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) Shenggen Fan. We also took a day trip to Chicago to visit the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. The opportunity to meet and interact with so many significant scholars of food security afforded me the chance to discuss my project in terms of policy, social action, political economy, climate change, trade, conservation, environmental degradation, and land tenure.

Coming out of this workshop, I now have a better understanding of where my research fits in the larger body of food security work, and

what its potential significance can be. This work promises to shed light on the evolution of Tanzania's political economy as that country has opened its borders to international investment, especially in terms of foreign fishing firms in Lake Victoria. As foreign fishing firms have become dominant, urban poverty and malaise have increased. As a result of the growing inequalities there, Mwanza is experiencing a surge in urban social movements to demand response from local and national governments. These types of social movements are not unique to Tanzania; indeed they are ubiquitous as the majority of people in the Global South now live in cities. Recent events in North Africa and Southwest Asia highlight the importance of understanding how economic and environmental inequalities threaten internal stability and the health and well-being of urban dwellers. This work is particularly relevant as states in the Global South race toward majority urban populations.

Ryan Z. Good is a PhD student in geography and former FLAS fellow (Swahili, summer 2010). His research was funded by the USAID Borlaug Fellows Program, the Purdue University Center for Global Food Security, and the UF Department of Geography.