

Village Volunteers case study: ICA Uganda review

With a grant from Village Volunteers, ICA Uganda (ICAU) brought in a local consultant to carry out an impact assessment partially to assess their past achievements, but also to offer guidance and learning for the way forward. Charles Wabwire, Director of ICA Uganda, takes up the story...

ICA Uganda (ICAU) is a national non-profit organization which was registered in Uganda in 1998 as a company limited by guarantee and as an NGO in 2003. ICAU is a statutory member of ICA International (ICAI). Twenty years since it started in Uganda, ICA has come a long way. It has had its best moments and low times, experienced many successes and challenges along this journey. Much of this journey is not documented and very little of it is known outside ICAU. It is against this background that this evaluation exercise was conceived. It started in August 2017 when ICAU with assistance from ICA UK commissioned a review of its activities over the period.

The main objective of this exercise was to capture and document the experiences and lessons learnt, with a purpose of identifying particular aspects of the project which have affected benefits either positively or negatively and making recommendations for the future course of the organization.



In carrying out this assignment, the Consultant visited 5 organisations and held focused group discussions and one-on-one interviews with key informants. The five organisations visited were: Eastern Archdiocesan Development Network (EADEN) in Iganga and Tororo districts, Banda Community Development Program in a Kampala slum (*pictured left*), Nsinze Sub county HIV/AIDS Association (NSHAWA) in Namutumba district, Caritas Kotido in Kotido Karamoja region and Kawempe Youth Centre, in Kawempe Division of Kampala.

In addition, the consultant conducted telephone interviews with beneficiaries from the following four projects: Bugade Community Development Initiative (BUCODI) in Mayuge district, Community Led Total Sanitation (WASH community training) among displaced persons in northern Uganda, Busaana Youth HIV/AIDS Project in Kayunga District, and Namalu town water and sanitation project, in Nakapiripirit district. The Consultant also held meetings with key ICAU senior management. A focused conversation/visioning exercise was held with ICAU board members to guide the future directions of ICAU based on the recommendations from the evaluation exercise. In all these areas, the Consultant reviewed, where available, records from the time that ICAU worked in these projects.



The findings of the report indicate that ICAU was generally successful in implementing the objective of maximising the participation of grass-roots people in taking responsibility for their own development by building the capacity of community-based organisations operating in those areas, although the degree of success varies in the different areas worked in. A key reason for this success lies in the way ICAU operates by placing itself within the organisation/community with which it partners and using the community members to implement their own activities, thus eliminating the need to have offices of its own and a full-time staff to implement the project activities. It maintains a list of trained facilitators, working in the different organisations that partner with ICAU, who can be called upon to facilitate in areas or organisations where ICAU works.



The evaluation found that in most of the areas visited or contacted by phone, the structures set up by ICAU still exist although in some cases the leadership has changed, and staff have moved on. Some organisations have dropped or modified the methods taught by ICAU as their partners have changed over time. Except in the case where one organisation collapsed altogether, like NSHAWA, findings show that there was a general improvement in the organisations ICAU worked with and, in turn, in the livelihoods of the communities served by these organisations. It was also noted that organisations where ICAU maintained a long-term relationship and continued to give support to showed better success than those it had a short-term relationship with.

The following challenges were identified by the Consultant, and the following recommendations made:

- i. The management ICAU itself is weak, with minimal involvement of the board. ICAU needs to review its board and its operational style to allow for greater participation of the board.
- ii. ICAU is invisible. ICAU should profile and market itself more aggressively so that its unique approach to community development can be acknowledged and replicated.
- iii. ICAU has no system for following up and co-ordinating the activities of trained facilitators. It needs to put in place a more organised system/database for follow-up, refresher training and networking.
- iv. ICAU success can only be viewed through the success of organisations it has worked with not their own initiatives. ICAU should aim to start and implement at least one long term project that will serve to demonstrate the success of its methods.
- v. While ICAU's approach of long-term commitment with partners has yielded good results, it needs to put in place a follow-up support system to ensure its interventions are sustainable in the organisations/areas it works in.

- vi. Out of the strategic directions arrived at in the visioning exercise, ICAU should finalise a strategic plan to implement the recommendations made in this evaluation.



This final recommendation was implemented by the ICAU Board (pictured left) during the finalisation of the report, with key vision elements including: Have an active membership (engaged in ICAU programmes); Have community demand-driven programmes; ICAU well-funded to implement its programmes sustainably; ICAU offering powerful consultancy

services; Effective communication strategy; Relevant strategic plan to respond to contextual issues. With these aims in mind, the Board clarified three key strategies: Strengthening internal organisational systems & governance; Strengthening ICAU programmes to reflect current development; Mobilising resources, forming partnerships & networking for growth.

As with many organisations, the challenge now is to raise the funds/generate the finance needed to make these ideas a reality. ICA Uganda will work hard to do this over the coming period.

**The Village Volunteer sponsorship scheme is a project of ICA:UK,
41, Old Birley Street, Manchester M15 5RF.**

**For more information on ICA:UK, the International Programme or Village Volunteers,
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