

JUNE 2020

# Newsletter of the VILLAGE VOLUNTEERS

*35 years supporting development work in Africa*

## Welcome!

This newsletter comes to you at an extraordinary time in our history. A time when our societies are being threatened not only by the global COVID 19 pandemic, by the economic challenges brought by the various strategies adopted by Governments to limit the spread of the virus, but also, cross-cutting them all, by the economic, social and political injustices heightened by the situation.



*Before the pandemic: Participants in the West African ICAs Regional Meeting gathered in Ho, Ghana in November 2019*

In this Newsletter we begin (Page 2) with a more general overview of COVID 19 in Africa.

We also look at how ICA Cote d'Ivoire (Page 3) and EPDI in Nigeria (Page 4) have been able to respond to the challenge. We report on the programme in Uganda funded by the Department of International Development (DFID) (page 4), report on a project from Ghana (page 6) and bring you a further story from the research carried out on the impact of the ICA's approach to community development over the past thirty years in Kenya (page 8). We end with other news on Page 10.

## **Do you know anyone who could become a Village Volunteer sponsor?**

With the focus on supporting the development and growth of local organizations in Africa, and on investments which other donors do not often support, our approach is both unique and vital for sustainable development.

Please visit [www.ica-uk.org.uk/village-volunteers](http://www.ica-uk.org.uk/village-volunteers) for more information and sponsorship forms

*Since we published the last Newsletter in December 2019, the world has been hit by the COVID 19 pandemic. In many countries this has had a profound effect on people's health, wellbeing and livelihoods and has challenged and tested Governments' competence in addressing such an issue, often revealing unrealised strengths and weaknesses, and changing the relationship between the State and its citizens.*

According to the [African Tracker](#) (accessed on the 8<sup>th</sup> June) there are currently 190,767 confirmed cases of COVID 19 on the continent, 83,592 cases where people have recovered, and 5,200 deaths. Like all statistics these have to be taken with caution, but the overall impression both from the statistics and from what we hear from people on the ground, is that Africa, so far at least, has not been affected to the same extent as other continents. The same figures for the UK alone, for example, are 288,827 confirmed cases and 40,680 deaths. Furthermore, the distribution of the cases is far from uniform. South Africa and Egypt seem to have the highest incidences, followed by Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Algeria and Morocco, while many other countries have relatively few cases. Even within countries, the pandemic often hits urban areas and border crossings harder than in rural areas.



*A man wearing a face mask walks through Kibera, an informal settlement in Nairobi, Kenya.  
(Donwilson Odhiambo / SOPA Images via AP Images)*

Different Governments on the continent have responded to the threat in different ways, but most have followed the example of countries outside the region and imposed a lockdown of some sort, without necessarily considering the very different contexts. Imposing a lockdown in a country like Uganda where only 2% of the population is over 65 (compared to 18% in the UK, and 28% in Japan), or trying to establish different behaviours (such as physical distancing, hand washing, etc.) in informal settlements where both space and water are often in short supply, may not only fail to prevent or contain the virus, but will

almost inevitably affect people's livelihoods as they are prevented from engaging in the activities that earn them sufficient money to enable them to survive.

We also see two distinct narratives emerging- on the one hand the use of force or even violence by security personnel to impose restrictions in the name of public health, while on the other the creativity and activism of community members sharing the few resources they have to, for example, make free masks, distribute jerry cans for hand washing, translate health messages into local languages.

Sources: <https://africanarguments.org/2020/04/22/one-size-fits-all-why-lockdowns-might-not-be-africa-best-bet/>; <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/coronavirus-colonialism-africa/>

Writing in [the Lancet](#) recently, Cicely Marston, Alicia Renedo and Sam Miles of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine highlight the importance of community participation in a pandemic, pointing to its importance both as a way addressing the issue comprehensively and immediately, but also to build future resilience. They identify four key steps to building such participation (*see panel*)

Amongst ICAs in Africa, especially those who have current or recent programmes in the community, there have been some efforts to contribute to community involvement. In Cote d'Ivoire, for example (a country where there are currently over 3,000 cases and 35 deaths) **ICA**

**Cote d'Ivoire** has continued to work with the beneficiaries of the rural development programme that they have been implementing with the support of ICA Japan for the past few years, and have introduced some new practices to help them cope with the pandemic. Their Director, **Eugène Kouame**, writes:

Overall our life has changed a lot due to this virus. For the recently completed project, coronavirus has had a serious impact:

- For those beneficiaries who raise chickens, the total confinement of Greater Abidjan (the most affected area), no longer allows the pursuit of this activity. The supply of chicken food is slower and marketing of agricultural and poultry products is affected by the level of technical unemployment suffered by private workers.
- For the Japanese chickens (Momiji) they still have a good egg production, only the restriction of movement due to coronavirus now greatly affects the production of chicks for the raising of laying chickens by our beneficiaries.
- But for palm plantations we are in a very good period with the rainy season which has started and also with the production of these palm trees which begins now, we hope that by next year they will have a good harvest.



*Egg production remains high*

With field visits less frequent, the phone has become a primary way of maintaining contact with the beneficiaries in each village. Our teams still go on visits but keeping social distance. We communicate on the remedial measures such as regular hand washing and how to utilise available resources (such as empty oil cans) to promote the new practices.

**Panel: Steps to community participation in the COVID-19 response**

**Invest in coproduction**

- Fund dedicated staff and spaces to bring the public and policy makers together
- Create spaces where people can take part on their own terms (eg, avoid bureaucratic formalities or technical jargon)
- Move beyond simply gathering views and instead build dialogue and reflection to genuinely codesign responses
- Invest not only for this emergency but also for long-term preparedness

**Work with community groups**

- Build on their expertise and networks
- Use their capacity to mobilise their wider communities

**Commit to diversity**

- Capture a broad range of knowledge and experiences
- Avoid one-size-fits-all approaches to involvement
- Consciously include the most marginalised

**Be responsive and transparent**

- Show people that their concerns and ideas are heard and acted upon
- Collaborate to review outcomes on diverse groups and make improvements

## African Issues: COVID 19 - the response (cont'd)

In Nigeria, **Hannah Anighoro** of the Esto Perpetua Development Initiative (EPDI) reports on how she and fellow EPDI worker Lovelyn, were able to monitor the distribution of resources and the use of measures to address COVID 19 in one Local Government authority within Lagos State. In 2016 the Federal Government launched part of the Social Investment Program to tackle poverty and improve the health and education of children and other vulnerable groups. As part of this programme the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, with the support of Lagos State Government successfully carried out the COVID-19 Palliatives distribution to 37,589 households, from 902 Schools, in the State.



*Food packages prepared and set out, and teachers practicing social distancing*

## African Update: SNF, Uganda



*As reported in the last issue, the Safe Neighbourhood Foundation (SNF) and ICA:UK have worked together to access a grant from the Small Charities Challenge Fund of the Department of*

*International Development (DFID). Here we share some of the progress made over the first 9 months of the programme and how SNF has been able to cope with the challenge of COVID 19.*

The training of the farmers began in earnest in September 2019 and has formed the backbone of the programme so far. SNF staff members travel by motorbike to meet with small groups of farmers to train them on improved agricultural and environmental practices. The emphasis is on how the farmers can improve their current ways of working and, without having to find extra resources, both improve their yields and better their care for the land. Even simple techniques such as spacing of plants, use of shade trees, protection of plants from goats and cows, etc. can make an appreciable difference.



In this period four demonstration plots were also established, where crops can be grown and nurtured in a way that demonstrates what is being taught and

where farmers can learn and share with each other. The programme uses the “village educator” approach, in which farmers are trained and then supported to pass on what they have learnt to others, so extending the impact of the training without requiring additional resources from the programme.

As part of the development of the Village educators ICA:UK ran a two day “Group Facilitation Methods” training in Mbale in December 2019. In addition to SNF staff and community members, we also welcomed Ugandan participants recruited through Agriterra, a Dutch-based organisation with whom ICA Netherlands has been working.



*Participants at the Facilitation Training in Mbale. John Cornwell (pictured) was one of the co-trainers.*

### **The impact of COVID**

With the onset of the global pandemic, there were initial fears that the programme would be severely disrupted. Elements of a lockdown were imposed, with public transport banned, groups of more than 10 people were not allowed to meet, schools and markets were closed, and social distancing encouraged. While many community members found these restrictions quite challenging (by not being able to take products to market, for example) they were not so limiting that the project could not continue. By being careful to limit the size of training groups, by only having one person travelling in a car or on a motorbike at a time, and by putting greater emphasis on the “village educator” aspect of the programme, then the programme was able to proceed as planned.

This ability was helped by the lockdown not staying in place very long. Because the health threat remained low, especially in rural areas, people urged the Government to relax some of the constraints so that their livelihoods did not suffer. Uganda remains one of the countries in Africa which has been least affected by the pandemic.

### **Village Savings and Loans Associations**

In December 2019, the programme area was affected by unseasonal rainfall- the usual hot, dry season being replaced by frequent and often heavy rains. As a result, farmers wondered what would come next: will the seasons revert to “normal”, meaning further rains coming soon, or will they now have an extended dry period? As people dependent on the seasons for their livelihoods and food security, such unpredictability raises new challenges. So alongside the DFID-funded programme is a second initiative which has supported people to set up Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs).

After some help to establish the groups and an initial training to equip members with the necessary knowledge and skills to run the scheme, groups are able to manage on their own, with just occasional support and guidance. Experience to date has shown that

1. Regular saving and access to loans has enabled families to better manage the payment of school fees, health care, funeral expenses and other more socially-orientated activities

## African Update: SNF, Uganda (cont'd)



*A meeting of the Lyama Savings Association. All together there are 52 members (42 women, 10 men), each saving Ushs 2,000 (approx. 50 pence) per week. Loans have enabled members to establish businesses and cover expenses such as school fees and medical costs.*

finance so that they are able to tide over times of delayed harvests, low market prices, failed crops and so on. Encouraging farmers to set up or join such a scheme will be part of the next phase of the programme.

2. Similarly, loans have been used by individuals and small collectives to set up their own profitable businesses-keeping chickens, growing vegetables, weaving mats, etc.

3. Many of the group members and leaders are women, providing them with income, status and confidence in a society that is traditionally male-dominated

Now farmers are beginning to see that such schemes can be another way to help them cope with the vagaries of a changing climate. By enabling them to access loans at crucial times, the VSLA loans give them an alternative source of

## African Update: Development Institute, Ghana



*The Development Institute*

*The Development Institute was established in Ghana in 2005 and is now an Associate member of the ICA International network. The Director, Ken Kinney, used to work with ICA Ghana and brought the values and approach to DI. The work of DI carries a strong focus on the environment, and here **Dzifa Kumaga** describes one of their current projects.*

### **Enhancing the Capacity of the Grassroots for Inclusive Environmental Governance**

The Development Institute has been implementing the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) project in 11 communities within the Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar site (KLCRS) in the Volta Region since 2016. GAGGA is a joint programme being run by three organisations - Both Ends, FCAM and Mama Cash. The aim of this programme is to strengthen the Lobby and Advocacy capacities of grassroots groups in the field of women's rights and environmental justice. The goal of the project in Ghana is to ensure inclusive resource governance, ecosystem restoration and economic opportunities for rural women and youth activists of the area.

The Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar site (which is the largest in Ghana) is a potential site for eco-tourism such as bird watching, night turtle watching and so on. Indigenous people also depend on this resource for their livelihoods. In spite of its economic potentials, the area has been under threat lately as a result

of unsustainable use of natural resources as well as poor governance and management practices. Additionally, the women are not fully involved in local level management and decision-making. The DI seeks to address these challenges and more.

From its inception, the project was divided into three main phases, each under specific objectives. The first two phases which was from 2016 to 2018 sought to reverse the exclusion of women in natural resource decision making processes, economic marginalization and low visibility and also enhance transparency through a number of strategies such as political and economic

empowerment of the grassroots and the use of the Negotiated Approach. Within these three years, 11 communities have been empowered to engage duty bearers as well as advocate for their rights; 10,000 mangrove seedlings have been planted within the area in partnership with the Wildlife Division; and institutional as well as operational capacities of six gender and environmental groups have been strengthened towards leadership and governance of the KLCRS, amongst others. Additionally a strategic plan has been developed collectively by all stakeholders within the area.



*Participants learning how to make fashion accessories from reeds: products include bangles, bags, hairbands*

The project is currently in the third and final phase and is being implemented under three objectives:

1. To empower local communities to fully and meaningfully participate in Natural Resources Management and Governance
2. To promote supplementary and alternative livelihoods as well as sustainable financial schemes to improve livelihoods of local communities and investment in blue-green businesses
3. To build a strong and visible CSO movement to ensure voices of local people are heard and processes are truly inclusive and sustainable of the KLCRS



*Women in the training using reeds to make baskets*

Under the second objective, The DI organised a four-day training workshop for the women and youth within project communities (23 participants in all) from the 4th to the 7th of December 2019. The training was a follow up to a previous one carried out in phase one and was hosted by Agortoe, one of the project communities. The main aim of this programme was

to improve their skills in the production of local crafts made from reeds for the international market and also introduce an alternative source of livelihood which is the making of fashion accessories such as hairbands and bracelets. The training was carried out by the Jesclan Art and Craft Enterprise. Participants were also taken through some lessons on entrepreneurship by the trainer.

After the programme, participants expressed their joy and were grateful for the opportunity to improve upon their skills and learn other crafts as well. *“I really enjoyed the programme and promise to teach the women in my church what I have learnt”* said Jennifer Fiavor. Another participant, Happy Zottor, a hat weaver, also found the training very useful to her work as it will help her make better hats not only for the local market but the international market as well.



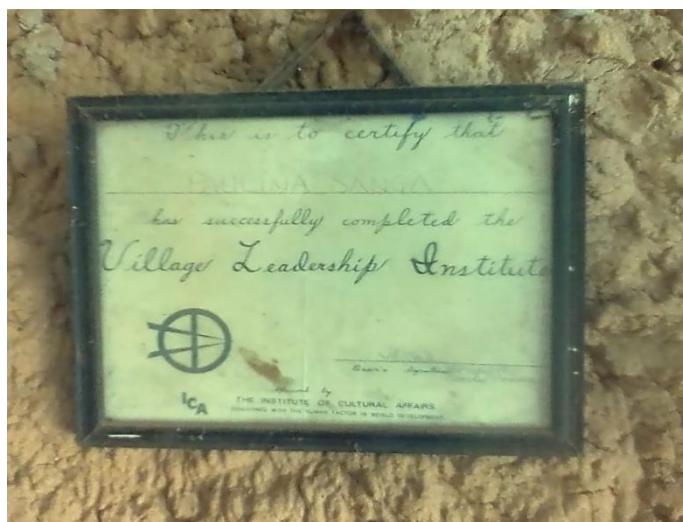
*Some of the finished products being made by the trainees*

The DI has also been engaging stakeholders both at the local and national level for the sustainable management of the area, under the third objective. Two stakeholder meetings (December 18, 2019 and January 22, 2020) have already been organised in Keta and Accra where concerns and ideas of stakeholders from both levels (communities, traditional authorities, District Assemblies, CSOs etc) have been discussed amidst plans of oil and gas exploration within the area by the Government.

## African update: Kenya

*As reported previously a team of people in Kenya, led by Patrick Mbullu and Henry Ikatukhu conducted research in 2019 to discover the longer term impact of the Technology of Participation methods and the wider ICA approach. We brought you one story from their report in the last issue, here is another from Vwevesi. More will follow in coming issues.*

ICA began work on the Samburu/Kyengoni Cluster and Vwevvesi Human Development Project (in what is now the Coast Province) in October 1980. Over the following eight years, the work grew to cover a total of 120 villages, 25 sub-locations, and 7 locations with a total population 108,256 people. The effect of the global restructuring of ICA led to reduced funding and a shift in priorities locally (with the local organization now working on its own), and ICA pulled out of the area in 1989.



*Never underestimate the value of a certificate. This has been on Paulina Sanga’s wall for over 30 years!*

Initial activities in Vwevvesi included setting up the Kituoni mobile clinic offering growth monitoring cards (for children under 5 years),

supplementary feeding for undernourished children; soap making (mwarubaini), cloth-printing, a nursery school (3-7 years old) and a primary school. Later on projects for rearing goats and training on modern farming (maize, millet etc.) and nutrition were added later.

From these activities the key accomplishments included accessible health care services; nursery and primary school facilities (catering for class classes up to primary 7); increased food security; reduced children undernourishment; trained and active Community Health Workers; more children able to attend school (as people were able to pay school fees with the income from the goat rearing).



*Mothers bringing their babies for weighing in Kituoni: training of mothers has proved crucial in improving nutrition amongst children, and has led to an upturn in attendance at school*



Thirty years on, a visit to Vwevvesi and interviews with twelve of the community members, revealed that the primary school (*pictured left*) has now been taken over by the Government, who provide trained and paid teachers; the clinic has been upgraded to a health centre, paid for by the county; clinic cards continue to be printed, now by a private company; there is an increase in vibrant small businesses in the community. Further, due to the training of mothers, the rate of malnutrition amongst children has dropped and attendance at primary school has risen.

Although the official registration of the project has now lapsed, community members are working to re-register it. Some activities still continue, informed by some of the **key lessons** that the community continues to hold from ICA's intervention:

- The importance of **listening skills**, both for leaders and within the community. Using such skills has increased the quality of discussions and the sense of togetherness in the community. This, in turn has led to the community receiving more services from public and non-governmental institutions.
- The value of **effective leadership**. Having stronger leadership in the community contributes across a range of aspects, but the one picked out was how it has enabled services (e.g. health, education) to come closer to the community
- How **learning new skills** can help community members launch new projects and businesses and so improve livelihoods

- The **involvement and engagement of the whole community in projects**. ICA took this approach while other NGOs tended to involve just a few families. For example, a toilet construction programme with one NGO didn't work well. They continued constructing toilets whilst the community continued going to the bush – no sensitization or engaging the community in understanding the benefits of a modern toilet.

The communities continue to face some key challenges, however, especially in farming and in the health of mothers and children. In farming, recurrent droughts have hit the farmers hard, especially those with livestock; Insect infestation has also been a cause of food shortage. In health, it is more of a gender issue, with men sometimes preventing women to attend child weighing, training and feeding programmes, and a low uptake of family planning methods due to men not allowing wives to go to clinics.

**African update: Other News**

**Henry Mpapale Ikatukhu**



Henry Ikatukhu, who is co-author of the research report on ICA in Kenya and a long-time associate of ICA globally, has been elected as the ICA International Vice-President for Eastern and Southern Africa. Henry attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> Human Development Training Institute (HDTI) in Kamweleni, and worked in various parts of Kenya before becoming more involved internationally, visiting Europe and the U.S. From 1984-87 Henry lived and worked in Cote d'Ivoire, fulfilling a number of roles. More recently Henry has been part of Community Organising Consultants, applying ICA methods to a wide variety of clients across East Africa. We welcome him to this new role.

**Ahmed Badawi**



We are sad to report that Ahmed Badawi, who worked with ICA Middle East and North Africa (MENA), passed away in Berlin in March due to complications after a kidney transplant. After leaving Egypt Ahmed remained close to ICA, visiting the UK several times to support our Volunteer Service Programme and inviting us into the Kumi project, addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Ahmed achieved a Masters at the School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS) in London, and gained his PhD at the Humboldt University (Berlin). As one of the many people touched by his death, described him, *“a great thinker, philosopher and peace builder with the highest integrity possible, a brave fearless heart and a sharp critical mind”*.

**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,  
contact ICA:UK on 0161 232 8444 or visit [www.ica-uk.org.uk](http://www.ica-uk.org.uk)**