Welcome!
This has been a productive few months, with new things starting but also other, longer processes being completed and reported on.

In Uganda, the programme funded by the Department of International Development (DFID) started in July (see page 3), and in September we received the report from the Village Volunteer-funded impact assessment carried out with ICA Uganda, offering insights into the past and opportunities for the future (page 5). In Kenya, we also received the report from the research commissioned by Village Volunteers, to better understand and explore the impact of the ICA’s approach to community development over the past thirty years (page 7).

In addition, we also provide updates on the continuing work in Egypt (page ?), Nigeria (page ?) and Cote d’Ivoire (page ?), giving you a sense of what is going on in the ICA network in Africa and how Village Volunteers is contributing to the network’s development.

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 for more information and sponsorship forms
As reported in the last Newsletter, Village Volunteers decided to contribute some funding towards a training in Technology of Participation methods for Lambassa ICA Benin. This training took place in July, led by Lan Levy and Nicolas Verdot from Fourmis du Changement in France. This is an abridged version of the longer report that Kassimou Issotina, Director of ICA Benin, produced after the event.

Twenty-six people attended this training, made up of ICA Benin staff and volunteers, partner organisations and members of community groups that ICA has been working with. The training consisted of 5 days, focusing on introducing participants to the Focused Conversation and Consensus Workshop and Action Planning methods, Graphic Facilitation and ending with a day on applications-how the facilitation methods and skills could contribute to the future of ICA Benin.

The training was very well received, and participants were keen to consider how they might apply what they had learnt, deciding to establish a small, informal learning community to support and encourage each other.

As Kassimou wrote, “This experience has been very rich for our ICA Benin board members and her staff. Personally, I was surprised to notice that it has a successful event. I was not sure that participants will be enough able to contribute to that. In the beginning, all the participants expressed their satisfaction to discover this new facilitation method and it powerful tools for community organizing and mobilization. From this moment, their participation has been better and they asked more questions in order to understand”.

On the last day of the training, the group explored how ICA Benin could best apply the methods. They reached several key recommendations: To strengthen facilitation initiatives; Visibility initiatives (including giving information through the radio, donor workshops); involving the youth; Workshops in local languages; Mr Sarè, one of the participants, even offered 5 hectares of land to ICA Benin in Yarakèou to help them establish a project there.

The main challenge now is how to follow up this event and monitor progress. Both ICA:UK and Fourmis di Changement will continue to support ICA Benin in this task, encouraging individuals and the organization to better incorporate the methods into their approach.
ICA:UK works with two partners in Uganda, ICA Uganda and the Safe Neighbourhood Foundation. In the following pages we report on developments in both organisations: ICA Uganda was the recipient of a Village Volunteers grant for carrying out an impact assessment, and Safe Neighbourhood Foundation and ICA:UK have worked together to access a grant from the Small Charities Challenge Fund of the Department of International Development (DFID). In this first article, Richard Kirya, Director of SNF, outlines the findings from the Baseline Survey carried out in August and September.

After completing the necessary arrangements and finalising agreements, the two-year “Developing Farmers Skills in Budaka” started on the 1st July 2019. Initial activities included recruiting farmers and carrying out a baseline survey to assess the farmers’ needs more accurately, but also to give the programme a point of reference for future comparison.

A total of 240 farmers, which is 20% representation of the project target beneficiaries participated in the survey as respondents. This was deemed representative enough considering the homogeneity of the target population comprising mainly small scale farmers. Purposive sampling of respondents was used with intention to involve 70% women and 70% youth as marginalized groups targeted by this project. The process ended with women comprising 159 (66.2%) and 47 (20%) youth below 30 years of age as survey respondents among others.

239 (99.6%) respondents are characterized as farmers mainly peasants. Farming is labour intensive, the labour-force being drawn from the relatively large households (5 to 9 members) as indicated by 154 (64.1%) respondents. Farmers are therefore implied to be semi-skilled as indicated by 153 (63.7%) participants reporting attainment of primary school education utmost and 19 (7.9%) reporting having had no formal education. 203 (84.6%) target farmers have not attended training of any type especially in the new area of this project intervention. That leaves Savings and Loans as the most important training conducted among farmer groups particularly Budaka Sub-county.

Survey findings indicate 98% farmers own land ranging from less than 1 to 5 acres, most of which is cultivable but falls short due to fragmentation. A minority of 1% borrows land and another 1% rents land for cultivation similarly for reason of land shortage in the project area. Crops grown comprise cereals (mostly maize), beans, maize and tubers (mainly cassava), as well as vegetables and fruits.
Farmers attempt to apply modern agrarian methods such as use of improved seeds and pesticides to improve yields but are challenged by generally unaffordable agricultural inputs. A section of farmers prefers traditional ways of farming e.g. using local seeds without manure.

There is low usage of soil conservation measures except intercropping which is regularly used more so for reason of land shortage. Similarly, there is low application of energy saving strategies which would ensure environmental conservation: 56.8% farmers never use cook fuel savers, 68.8% farmers never use solar power and 99.6% farmers never use biogas.

Household income is derived from agro-based enterprises mainly farming, the most important being ground-nuts, maize and rice. Amounts produced range from less than 100 to 200 kilograms and to 300 kilograms in the case of rice, while amounts sold range from 50 to 180 kilograms. All farmers sell their produce individually mainly at farm gate and to a lesser extent at local markets. 98% farmers in the project area fall short of food before the next season harvest. Coping mechanisms applied include undertaking income generating activities mainly casual work, reducing the number of meals, reducing the quality of meals and borrowing food or money to buy food.

Alternative sources of income among farmer households include most importantly sale of livestock, borrowing and taking loans mainly from saving groups. The general average monthly income is Uganda Shillings 65,760 (US $ 17.8), while average monthly income from agriculture is Uganda Shillings 31,550 (US $8.6). Household income is spent most importantly on health care, education, purchase of foodstuff in drought, investment in livestock rearing and in agricultural inputs.

37% farmers belong to Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs). The groups are however challenged by low income levels among the members, low financial literacy and lack of group saving and credit skills especially loan management.

In conclusion, this baseline survey has helped identify development gaps among farmers which justifies this project intervention. It is envisaged that at project end-time, anticipated changes will be realized particularly modern farming practices, improved yields and enhanced food security, improved household incomes as well as better use of natural resources, all of which will serve to improve the quality of life.
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 that 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.

African update: Kenya

As reported previously a team of people in Kenya, led by Patrick Mbullu and Henry Ikatukhu have been conducting research to discover the longer term impact of the Technology of Participation methods and the wider ICA approach. Their report is now out and full of interesting information about the different initiatives visited, the long term impact they have had on communities and individuals. Here we bring you one story...others will follow in future issues

Kamweleni Human Development Project (HDP) began in 1978, in Machakos District, at the request of the local community. Currently located in Kalama Ward, Kyanzasu Sub-County, Machakos County, it was ICA’s first rural development pilot project in Kenya.

As in Kabiro HDP (which had been set up in 1975 in a Nairobi slum area), initial activities revolved around consultations and a planning process for change. ICA staff moved into the village, working hand in hand with the villagers to implement the planned activities. More
importantly, to impart the development methods and motivational skills needed for the community to do its own projects (DOOP). The community created a motivational song called ‘Kamweleni Kuseo’ – Kamweleni is Good. In addition, the ICA staff worked collaboratively with the village to create a delivery system that linked the community with the public and private sector providers. ICA was issued a land title deed.

The process involved consultations and development of community-based plans. A two-year comprehensive human development plan was created with a phased implementation plan development. Weight and focus were on practical social, physical and agricultural actions. These enabled villagers to immediately start implementing their action plans. Other and advanced plans were developed later as the village developed. Initial activities included: making modern bricks, rain water harvesting, poultry keeping, soil conservation. A primary school was constructed, a Human Development Training Institute built and training schools (HDTIs) started. These enhanced generation of new ideas, change in attitudes and objectives for the villagers. A new sense of accomplishment, self-confidence and willingness to try new ventures was attained and an educational process begun. The project demonstrated what is possible when comprehensive socio-economic development involves all community members in planning and implementation.

ICA left Kamweleni in late 2000 after handing over the properties to community members. By the time ICA left, Kamweleni had reached 377,042 people, worked with 444 village projects, 90 sub-location cluster projects, 20 location cluster projects and three division cluster projects.

Now, nearly twenty years after ICA left, Kamweleni is a community with a secondary (now with a boarding facility) and a primary school run by the Catholic Church, a sub county clinic (county government funded), a tarmac road and rural electrification serving the entire community. Children go to school without walking long distances; interaction between teachers and parents is excellent. The village is now served by a very good mode of transport which The main benefit of this project is that Road networks and
communication to Machakos has improved, saving time and boosting economic activity. Current activities include the construction of a water tank, expansion of the primary and secondary schools, and the community is presently constructing a water surface dam with funding support from African Sand Dam Foundation. The stakes are operational with stake leaders still in place. These were all key aspirations in Kamweleni’s original strategic plan (visioning exercise). ICA taught Kamweleni people to work together; through this they have achieved and learned new agricultural techniques, still in use.

Despite this progress, most of the initial activities (including the HDTI, brick making, soil conservation and the rain water harvesting tank) have now stopped and, as one community member said ‘we have lacked proper coordination of the projects after ICA left’. Water from the dam is not piped to reach the community and also there is limited storage tanks to serve the entire community. A major worry voiced was the threat of polluting the planned surface dam from a planned construction of a sewer line from Machakos down through the village that will pollute the water and the environs. Another frustration raised was that ICA didn’t have a proper handover /succession plan to ensure community preparedness to take forward all the activities.

So what have we learnt?
Those interviewed said they learnt more skills when working together; self-sustenance; modern farming (before they only planted millet); how to build modern houses.

A key lesson was that when communities are well coordinated they can achieve more of their set goals and realise their dreams. Within that a key factor for success was following their timeline (calendar of activities), making changes where they stagnated in the process of achieving their goals. ICA staff facilitated community togetherness through regular meetings. The stakes worked together to plan for their activities at the smallest level of the village, generating comprehensive ideas.

For the people of Kamweleni, what distinguishes the ICA approach from other Non Government Organisations (NGOs) is the comprehensive approach, involving every individual in the community, not just specific individuals or groups, facilitating them to learn how to work together as a community and as groups simultaneously and, ultimately, ensuring the community took responsibility for its own development and its sustainability.

This is one example from a report rich in stories of personal and community transformation. Further extracts) from ICA work in Kabiro, Vwewesi, Isinya and Ng’wesi will be published in future issues of this Newsletter and selected stories from the 20+ people interviewed.

1 A HDP was divided into 5 sections of the community called stakes. These enabled local participation in planning and implementation of projects
The West African ICAs Regional Meeting
Just as we write, this meeting is taking place in the Eastern city of Ho, in Ghana. Hosted by the Development Institute, the meeting has brought together representatives from Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria. We will report more fully on this meeting in the next Newsletter.

And in Egypt...
We hear from Sabah Khalifa of ICA Egypt of their involvement in two major development projects. The Institute of Cultural Affairs and its team are proud to be implementing an Urban Development Programme in the railway area of Qalyub governorate. In collaboration with a number of associations, the programme has built the educational and knowledge capacity of 5,822 young people and girls from the target areas. The training provided for them has helped to improve income and provide jobs for 2,350 and supported some of them to start small projects. The overall programme was commissioned by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development and funded by the European Union.

Sabah has also been involved in a major water project, funded by USAID, working with local leaders in the target area to establish the largest drinking water station for the villages of Hanadi and Hamidat, near Luxor.

The Village Volunteer sponsorship scheme is a project of ICA:UK,
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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