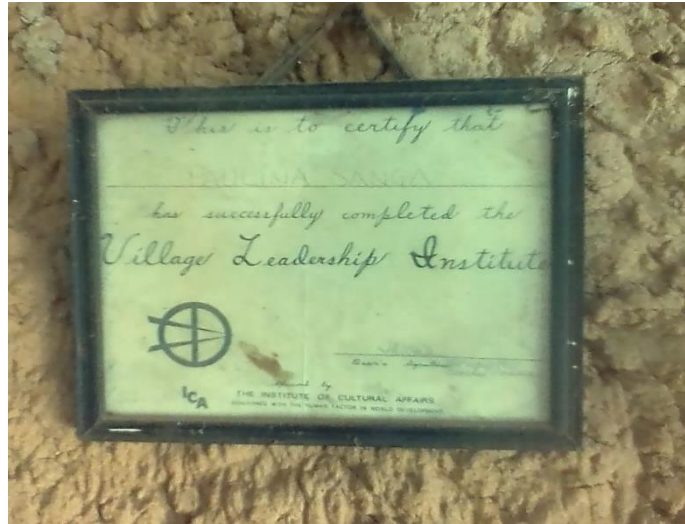


African Case Study: Vwevesi, Kenya

In 2019 a team of people in Kenya, led by Patrick Mbulu and Henry Ikatukhu, conducted 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 example.

ICA began work on the Samburu/Kyengoni Cluster and Vwevesi 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 Vwevesi 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.



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

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



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.