

African Case Study: TOP Training in Benin



Participants and trainers at the Facilitation training in Cotonou, Benin.



In 2019 Village Volunteers contributed 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.

TOP Training in Benin (cont'd)

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 its 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.

“If I missed this opportunity, it’s as if part of my life escaped me”

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