

Village Volunteers Sponsorship Scheme

Impact Assessment 2024



In early 2024, ICA:UK carried out a review of the Village Volunteer sponsorship scheme in order to assess its impact and to inform its future direction.

The scheme has been running with its current focus since 2007 (having begun originally in 1985), with 13 local organisations in Africa benefitting from over £30,000 in grants, all raised from individual sponsors in the UK. In addition, ICA:UK was able to leverage over £200,000 from institutional donors (UK Government, Trusts and Foundations) for the benefit of partners in Africa. As part of the review, ICA:UK carried out a survey with six of its grantees, all of whom had received funding (either directly from the scheme or leveraged through ICA:UK) over the past decade.



Developing community ownership comes across as a key aspect of VV-funded projects, including working with “village educators”- community members ready and able to pass on knowledge to others

This report summarises their responses (we had 100% response rate), focusing on the resulting developments in their organisations and on their recommendations to ICA:UK for the continuation of the scheme. In addition to the six organisations included in the survey, two further organisations (both in Kenya) received funding from Village Volunteers in late 2023: Support for Community Response received £1,940 for a Training in the Technology of Participation, and The Kombuni Women’s Group received £1,842 for a Training of Climate Change Educators. Although not included in this

survey (due to it being too early to assess medium or longer-term impact), reflections from the immediate results are included.

The Village Volunteers sponsorship scheme is a project of ICA:UK
(registered charity no. 1090745)

To learn more and become a sponsor

<https://ica-uk.org.uk/village-volunteers/>

1. The respondents and projects

Year	Organisation	Grant amount	Type of grant ¹	Purpose
2014	Tujiendeze Youth Trust Fund, (now Tujiendeze Youth Organisation) Kenya	£2,200	Direct	Impact Assessment and Strategic Plan
2016	Lambassa ICA Benin	£2,500	Direct	Impact Assessment and Strategic Plan
2017	ICA Uganda	£2,100	Direct	Impact Assessment and Strategic Plan
2019	Safe Neighbourhood Foundation, Uganda	£50,000 (over 2 years)	Indirect (from the UK Government)	Improving the livelihoods of 4,400 farmers in Budaka, Uganda
2019	Patrick Mbullu/Henry Ikatukhu, Kenya	£1,962	Direct	Research into the impact of ToP in Kenya
2019	Lambassa ICA Benin	£2,800	Direct	ToP Training for staff and volunteers
2022	ICA Kenya	£2,500	Direct	Contribution towards African ICAs Conference

2. Findings

- All respondents were able to be fully accountable, reporting that the funds given were spent as planned, and agreed goals for the funding were met.
- The projects all encouraged and enhanced people's (members, communities, partners) participation, enabling ideas to be expressed freely, giving people a stronger voice and sense of ownership
- The value and usefulness of the Technology of Participation (ToP) methods was recognised, both in specific training courses, but also as a central pillar of programmes with the communities

Our approach using the Technology of Participation to build the structures of grassroots organisations and involve communities in their own development while rooting ourselves in the communities is working (ICA Uganda)

- Catalytic projects require follow-up: training does not have impact without translation into practice; planning does not have impact without implementation; research requires uptake. While levels of impact vary, all partners were instrumental in ensuring that the immediate results are being translated into lasting changes.
- Some of the challenges identified included logistical (distance, transport, etc.), working with multiple local languages, the impact of COVID and the accompanying lockdown, and the difficulty of working during national elections (particularly where there was violence and when the internet was closed down).

¹ In this context "Direct" means the grant was taken from funding generated by Village Volunteer sponsors, with the ICA:UK Board making the final decision based on a proposal and assessment by staff/advisors; "indirect" means money raised by from external donors for a specific purpose/programme, where ICA:UK played a fundraising/project manager role and held overall responsibility for the proposed use of the funding given.

3. Learnings

In essence, the lessons learned from this project/activity serve as guiding principles that shape and inform our ongoing efforts to facilitate sustainable development, empower communities, and create positive change. (ToP/ICA Impact Research in Kenya)

- a) The different types of projects led to different learning amongst grantees, but overall there was recognition of the value and importance of the funded project leading, in all cases, to significant organisational and programme developments and shifts amongst the grantees (see Impact below).
- b) Across projects, organisations saw the need to improve their visibility, as a way to attract recognition, partners and funding
- c) For those whose grant covered research and/or review, key learnings included:
 - Affirmation of the impact of past activities
 - Greater understanding of what does and does not work, both in terms of programming and impact (differences in level of community ownership, for example)
 - The importance of long term relationships, both with communities, with staff members and other organisations
 - A sense of the legacy of the organisation
 - The effectiveness of ToP (Technology of Participation) methods was reaffirmed, demonstrating their utility in fostering inclusive decision-making, consensus-building, and community empowerment.
- d) For those who received funding for events (such as a conference or training), learning included:
 - How to prepare, organise and deliver such events
 - The importance of having strong financial arrangements in place to ensure that all costs are covered and the organisers are not left with outstanding debts
 - The value of sharing, collaboration and networking

The impact assessment report has been an eye opener to TYO. It has been used as an evaluation tool where we've done adjustments to the TYO activities in the community so as to meet the specific needs of the young people. (Tujiendeleze)

As an organization, this training made us realize that the ToP was an important opportunity to assert our interests, activities and if possible to earn money (ICA Benin)

- e) For those who received programme-orientated grants, key learnings were:
 - The importance of community ownership and an understanding of how it can be built (e.g. through the use of ToP methods, working with "Village Educators" and Savings and Loans Groups).
 - Not only does a sense of ownership amongst the community contribute to sustainability, but it can also reduce the cost of delivery- by removing the need for programme staff to train all the community participants and instead developing a group of educators able to pass on what they have learnt to others.
 - The need for flexibility and responsiveness in delivery of programmes, especially when confronted with external constraints (in this case, COVID and the associated lockdown and national elections which led to the internet being closed down).

4. Impact

Whilst the learning has value in its own right, it is the extent to which it is put into practice that really determines the impact of the funding. Here it was noted that financing a combination of impact assessment and a strategic planning process offers a useful framework for ensuring the learning from the assessment is used to inform the future direction and priorities of the organisation.

For ten to fifteen years prior to this exercise, ICA Uganda operated and was based mainly among grassroots communities where we had projects running. Out of this exercise, ICAU realised the need to be more visible. It was resolved during this exercise that ICA should find itself a permanent home.
(ICA Uganda)

The longer-term impact of this project is that it allowed our organization to better organize its activities. We clearly defined our areas of intervention so as no longer disperse our energies
(ICA Benin)

Overall, the differences made as a result of the VV funding include:

- **Strengthening of organisational systems and governance:** This includes making decisions about office space (ICA Uganda acquired an office, ICA Benin closed theirs); reviewing Board membership; decisions about recruitment and retention of staff members; a greater focus on staff capacity, ensuring they have the skills needed for implementation; incorporation of learning through effective monitoring and evaluation.
- **Strengthening of programmes:** ensuring programmes are community-centred and focused on sustainability by being grounded in the ToP methodology; adoption of new approaches now proven to be effective (e.g. use of Village Educators, Climate Change Promoters, Savings and Loans Associations); improved training for community leaders.

Pictured right: A Savings and Loan Association meeting in Uganda- these self-managed groups are proving key for community development



- **Mobilising of resources, partnerships and networking:** Incorporating advocacy work on climate change; fostering a Village Climate Change Movement; establishing partnerships with other organisations; building long-term relationships with communities and donors for sustainability.

[TYO] has identified and worked with key strategic partners such as the Mukuru Skills Training Centre located in Mukuru slums. The institution has been supporting young people from the Mukuru slums pursue their vocational courses. (Tujiendeze)

5. Recommendations from partners for ICA:UK/Village Volunteers

All recipients appreciated the funding from VV and their responses offer some indication of the sort of impact that carefully used, often small, amounts of money can have both in helping an organisation grow and develop, but also how the learning from such projects can inform improvements in programmes, adapting them to better suit the needs of the participants. More specific recommendations included:

- a) VV to fund regular impact assessments and strategic planning for partners. All recipients of funds for this activity appreciated its value and felt that more regular assessments (e.g. every five years) would provide important opportunities for organisations to step back, review what they have done and then plan for the coming period based on a deeper understanding of the needs of the communities and of their own performance.



ICA Uganda Board members pictured during their strategic planning process

- b) An overall absence of funding is still raised by partners as an ongoing constraint, and therefore a recommendation to ICA:UK/VV is to help partners identify and secure longer term funding and support. This will bring a level of security and consistency which will bring greater confidence to organisations to concentrate on delivery.
- c) In addition to resource mobilisation, partners recommend ICA:UK/VV support other important aspects of organisational development such as capacity building, knowledge sharing, monitoring and evaluation, advocacy and policy influence.
- d) Learning gathered from evaluations and impact assessments often points to the need to adapt programmes either by changing an approach or adding a new element. Partners recommend, therefore, that ICA:UK/VV could support such developments as a way of keeping programmes in tune with the changing needs of the communities.

Based on the experience, we have realized the project would have more impact if environmental training was introduced to school going youth in Primary and Secondary schools with creation and training of environmental clubs commonly known as "Earth Keepers" Clubs (Safe Neighbourhood Foundation)