

Village Volunteers in Action

Training in the Technology of Participation with ICA Côte d'Ivoire

ICA has been active in Côte d'Ivoire for over 40 years, with the current non-government, not-for-profit being registered by the Ivorian authorities in 1996. Working primarily at the community level, ICA continues to implement programmes in the areas of health, education, agriculture and environment.

In 2025 ICA Côte d'Ivoire identified the need for more training in the Technology of Participation (ToP) facilitation methods both to strengthen their skills as community development workers, but also as a key step in developing a facilitation and training service which they could offer to others, thereby generating income and reducing their dependency on donors.



A key requirement was that the training should be in French, so Village Volunteers joined with Lan Levy and Nicolas Verdot of [Fourmis du Changement](#) (ICA in France) to finance and deliver the training, which was held in April 2026 with seven participants (six from Côte d'Ivoire, one from Lambassa ICA in Benin) in Agboville and 9 local leaders in Mlankouassikro.

Pictured left: Participants in the Agboville training with Lan Levy, one of the trainers from Fourmis du Changement (r-l): Frédéric N'DRI, Caroline ABBE, BROU Reine, KOFFI Amani, Marie-Paul AMOU (Benin), Lan LEVY, Isabelle N'DRI et Eugène KOUAME

As with all ICA training, the agenda allowed participants time to both experience the methods, to understand the thinking and the structure behind them and then to practice the methods themselves. In addition to covering the core methods of ToP, the trainers also shared the history of the methods, the competencies of a facilitator, the key elements of a good training programme and how to apply and adapt the methods based on the intention of the meeting and the wider context within which the methods are being used.



Isabelle N'DRI, Reine BROU and Eugène Kouame during a group exercise



Caroline ABBE, KOFFI Amani and Marie-Paul AMOU in discussion

By the end of the workshop, I feel better equipped to participate in community meetings, group sessions, and collective decision-making processes. I also believe I can use some of the lessons learned in my own environment to help members of my community communicate more effectively, seek consensus, and collaboratively develop solutions tailored to their realities.

N'Guessan Mathieu

Following the initial training in Agboville, Eugène Kouame, Reine Brou (ICA Côte d'Ivoire), Lan Levy and Nicolas Verdot (Fourmis de Changement) travelled to Mlankouassikro to conduct a workshop for the leaders of 10 of the Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs)¹ supported by ICA Côte d'Ivoire.



The training was led by Lan and Nicolas, focusing on “How to Preserve the Sustainability and Increase the Income of VSLAs.” The objective of this workshop was to enable the ten leaders of the various VSLAs in the villages of Mlankouassikro and Kouabo to understand the benefits of having VSLAs and to propose action ideas that will allow them to ensure the sustainability of the VSLAs they are responsible for leading.

The results achieved during this workshop included the development of actions plans and budgets for cassava cultivation projects, the rental of tarpaulins, chairs, and dishes, and a market gardening project. At the end of this workshop, the participants expressed their wish that this type of workshop be repeated every two years in order to evaluate the activities that were proposed and to help them contribute to solving any failures or shortcomings encountered. In addition, as a result of seeing the training taking place, community members from Kouabo and Agboville were motivated to create their own VSLAs.



VSLA leaders at the training. Nicolas Verdot is at the back.

ToP training helps us better manage our Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) activities. We understand the importance of involving all members in discussions, exchanges, and decision-making regarding the life and activities of our association and that the success of our VSLA depends on our ability to think, decide, and act together.

Ms. Kouakou, Member of Dynamic VSLA – Agboville

What next?

Following these two trainings ICA Côte d'Ivoire plan to expand their use of ToP Methods. The ambition is to make ToP a key tool for improving participation, collective decision-making, stakeholder mobilization, and action planning within the communities supported by ICA Côte d'Ivoire. This will involve experimenting with and gradually integrating ToP methods into activities with VSLAs,

¹ Village Saving and Loan Associations are groups formed by community members which enable them to save small amounts of money and to then borrow from the fund created to initiate individual and collective enterprises. They are proving to be very effective vehicles for community development based on local assets

cooperatives, community organizations, schools, and other beneficiary groups. In the medium term, the intention is to extend the use of ToP to other programmes and intervention areas of ICA Côte d'Ivoire, particularly in the fields of education, agriculture, the environment, economic empowerment, and social cohesion.

While in Côte d'Ivoire, Nicolas helped ICA staff develop a new [website](#) to launch a new facilitation service that ICA is now offering, based on ToP. In time, this will not only enable them to reach a wider audience but also to generate some income, thus reducing their dependency on external donors.



ICA Côte d'Ivoire Director Eugène Kouame (*pictured left*) recognises the importance of continuing to strengthen the capacities of ICA Côte d'Ivoire staff and community leaders to use and share these methods through practice, co-facilitation, and mentoring sessions. By documenting experiences, collecting participant testimonials, and the sharing of best practices, ICA will be able to identify the most effective approaches, develop tools adapted to the Ivorian context, and progressively promote a genuine culture of participation and collective decision-making within the communities and teams of ICA Côte d'Ivoire. He writes:

“Our long-term goal is therefore to make ToP not just a method used in a few workshops, but a sustainable working approach that promotes collective intelligence, ownership of decisions and community action.”

The Village Volunteers sponsorship scheme is a project of ICA:UK

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To learn more and become a sponsor:

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