

Village Volunteers Impact: Lambassa ICA Benin

The ICA:UK Board approved a grant of £2,500 to ICA Benin to carry out a comprehensive assessment of their work and the difference it is making. This followed a similar process supported in the Tujindeleze Youth Trust Fund in Kenya which was a great success. After some delays the review was completed and a comprehensive report produced by the local consultant hired for the task.



The impact assessment looked at all Lambassa ICA Benin's programmes since it was started. These included training in the Technology of Participation, Legal Empowerment of the Poor, Rights to Water and Sanitation (including development of cooperation between towns and communities, support for Consumers Associations and provision of wells) and Women Empowerment Initiatives (including promoting access to land, justice, economic opportunities and decision making).

The broad recommendations for programmes that came from the review were:

- To develop a training plan to build and maintain a pool of ToP facilitators available to the organisation
- Although there is no local action resulting from the Legal Empowerment initiative, UNDP continue to use the final report as a guide, and there is an opportunity to develop a project around one of the four pillars of the consultation
- ICA Benin should capitalise on its track record in the water and sanitation sector to raise its profile by (e.g.) developing a multi-year advocacy strategy, continuing to strengthen more independent Consumer Associations, carrying out more research, introduce the use of solar panels to power water pumps
- To continue the work on Women's Empowerment by (e.g.)



Consultation with a women's group during the review

forming and supporting a national network of women's associations, increasing advocacy and lobbying to facilitate women's access to land, working more with students

Organisationally, the review recommended;

- Putting more emphasis on developing and financing longer term programmes
- Identifying and exploring financial strategies that would bring greater sustainability to the organisation
- Raising the profile of the organisation through attending events, using media, etc.
- Improving both internal and external communications, especially through providing access to the internet
- Developing and expanding the structure of the organisation to better support the different target groups and types of programmes

In response to the review, ICA Benin held a workshop to consider the findings and to develop a strategic plan for the organisation going forward. They decided to focus on three key areas: the Technology of Participation, Water and Sanitation, Activities for Women and Young People, recognising that the capacity of ICA Benin needs to be developed in order to achieve progress in these areas. In particular they need to move from shorter-term projects to longer-term programmes, and to reduce staff turnover.

ICA Benin now has four main strategies for the next three years:

1. Development and implementation of a three-year ToP training plan
2. Search for financial partners for long-term projects with fairly large amounts
3. Strengthen the capacities of the leaders in charge of the management of women's groups
4. Define all the roles necessary for the effective functioning of the organization and recruit for them in a gradual way taking into account the projects and the available financial means

They have also elaborated more detailed action plans to accompany each of these strands, one of which is to collaborate with ICA:UK to identify and approach potential funders of longer term programmes.

This marks the end of the Village Volunteer project with ICA Benin. By financing this review and the subsequent strategic plan, we have enabled ICA Benin not only to gather evidence of its impact, but also to recognise and act on the need to be more focused in their approach and better equipped as an organisation if they want to expand and deepen the difference they are making. This recognition lies at the heart of what it means to be an effective support for local development.