

## Local Ownership - A plea for motivating and mobilising communities!

On behalf of Wilde Ganzen, Project Advisor Imke Straaten participates in the Young Expert Programmes (YEP). For one year she lives and works in Uganda and engages in a dialogue with our partner organisations: How do they involve the community? What do they need as an organisation to mobilise communities? And, how can Wilde Ganzen support them in this? Through this blog series she shares her stories, experiences and findings from the field.

Local ownership ensures a lasting and active involvement of the community and is therefore crucial for sustainable change in the long term. Therefore Wilde Ganzen wants to stimulate its partner organisations to work on sustainable poverty reduction not only *for*, but wherever possible, *together with* the community.

### But how do you involve the community?

With this question as a guideline, I visited partner organizations on a regular basis. Practice shows that the extent to which organisations involve the community in their activities is very diverse: Varying from providing information during a meeting, to facilitating self-mobilisation in which the community decides what the project will look like from start to finish.

The partner organisations are unanimous about one thing: if you want to involve individuals, households or communities, you have to start by enthusing. And that can only be achieved by appealing to **intrinsic motivation**: That which drives people.

'Community mobilization starts with community motivation'

- Stephen Kamyé (BOTFA)



### What the farmer doesn't know, he won't eat'.

People - and so 'farmers' - naturally cling to specific ideas or convictions, such as 'Chemical pesticides are indispensable for a good harvest'. And thus (often) exhibits a specific behaviour. Stimulating behavioral change can therefore be challenging.

Practice shows that the partner organisations play a crucial role in this. First of all, these organisations are on the spot and understand what moves people, from the inside. Secondly, because of their knowledge, experience and network, they can offer individuals, households and the community access to experiences, different from what they were used to so far. Whereby they ensure that this (new) experience makes them feel good and therefore intrinsically motivated.

### You can learn to motivate

The partner organisations support – inspire – people to make 'better' choices for themselves and their environment. They don't do this in a directive way, but providing them the opportunity to experience things in a different way, themselves. The working method of each organization is unique. However, I realise that the following 4 overarching underlying principles contribute to successful community mobilization.

#### 1. Seeing is believing

Without utility, there is no need.

On the demonstration farm of the organisation BOTFA, farmers learn all about '[Integrated Farming](#)' and start making organic fertilizer. A practical experiment allows farmers to experience the added value by themselves. The use of organic fertilizers delivers something, so farmers are willing to start with circular agriculture themselves at home.

The partner organisations emphasize the power of **demonstration**: "Seeing is believing".



'The best way for training is to see it with their own eyes. You should provide them a good experience and an opportunity to admire'

- **Stephen Kamyé (BOTFA)**

Seeing and even admiring successful farmers or neighbours is motivating.

In Uganda too, the saying: 'Good example is a good consequence' applies. Therefore, knowledge sharing often takes place through the use of role models or so-called **key farmers**, who share their knowledge and experiences from 'farmer-to-farmer' and are thus an example to many.

'Uganda is a community who would like to touch. When they believe it, they own it'

- **Magdalene Amujal (Kulika Uganda)**

## 2. Keep it Simple

At the **training centre** of van [Kulika Uganda](#), **key farmers** are trained during a three-week practical course to become agricultural entrepreneurs, with an extra focus on organic farming. In the demonstration garden, one thing becomes immediately clear: All materials are reused.



'Adopt, adapt and adjust. Keep it low-key'

- **Magdalene Amujal (Kulika Uganda)**



By reusing materials such as car tires, rubbish bags or jerry cans, you keep ideas accessible and affordable. This motivates farmers to use the available materials to put a specific idea into practice at home.

'The alternative should be cheaper or better. So, you don't need a lot of science to mobilise communities'

- **Magdalene Amujal (Kulika Uganda)**



### 3. Freedom of choice

In the experimental garden of the organisation MCAFS, farmers can plant various trees themselves: Msambya trees are planted for fencing, the bark of the Mtuba tree is used for making art and fruit trees are an extra source of income and a nutritious addition to the daily meal.

'They have to see it'

- **Nicolas Yiga (MCAFS)**



Nicolas Yiga and his wife Rose emphasize that there must always be **freedom of choice**: It is important that various options are offered so that farmers can choose how they want to and/or can contribute to combating deforestation.

### 4. Stronger together



Growing together and sharing the harvest gives joy and self-confidence: you can offer something to others. The social cohesion in the community also ensures that challenges are solved in groups.

'A sense of togetherness is fostered by the introduction of Self-Help-Groups.'

- **Azoli Bahati (Abanya-Rwenzori Mountaineering Association)**

Practice shows that households, Self-Help-Groups, Village Saving and Loans Groups (VSLG) or Saving and Credit Cooperatives (SACCO) play an important role: Group formation enables farmers to exchange knowledge and experiences, to save together and/or to influence the price together. Above all, the group forms a social safety net for challenging times.

### To conclude

Although started from the agricultural sector, I am convinced that these **four principles** are also useful for partner organisations who are working on local ownership in other sectors, such as WASH, education and health care. Local ownership starts with intrinsic motivation. Behaviour that is intrinsically motivated does not need a stimulus from the external environment. If there is local ownership, then a community is willing to take the initiative itself and to take responsibility for the continued existence of the initiative.

The enthusiasm, motivation and mobilization of individuals, households and communities are therefore essential for sustainable change in the long term.

Facilitating local ownership takes time. The partner organisations play a crucial role in this. But they are (often) limited by donors. Some donors want to see concrete results within the foreseeable future. As a result, the importance of the first - often invisible, but essential - phase is overlooked in the terms of collaboration. The prescribed duration of an initiative is therefore often insufficient for the partner organisations to facilitate local ownership.

'Uganda is a community who would like to touch. When they believe it, they own it. However, the process of owning takes time. Even more than 3 years'

- **Magdalene Amujal (Kulika Uganda)**

In addition to partner organisations, donors can also make a valuable contribution to promoting active community involvement. I would therefore like to pledge that donor organizations openly and curiously discuss with the partner organizations the importance of community participation and what they need as an organization to facilitate this participatory process.

I am convinced that if donor organizations support partner organizations and give them space to enthuse, motivate and mobilise a community, initiatives will become less donor-driven. And start where they belong: With the people who matter.

And that is sustainable poverty reduction.

#### **Want to know more?**

Want to know more about the importance of community participation? Listen to the experiences of the Kenyan organisation Decese. In in [this](#) video this video Sophie Kibuywa explains why she believes in active community involvement