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Annual Review 2004

Village AiD

Introduction . . .

Africa matters and the voice of Africa needs to be heard! This 2004 Village AiD annual report has been largely written by our African partners. They speak of vigorous, innovative work in the context of tough physical and social conditions, and also tell some of the human stories behind the statistics. We are sure you will find it interesting.

Susanne Garnett, Exec. Director.



Chair report for Village Aid 2004 review

2004 has been an exciting year for Village Aid in all sorts of ways but one of the most satisfying ones is that we have met and even exceeded the 20% growth target we set ourselves last year. The introduction of a full-time fundraiser has been a major factor in achieving this. As planned, Darryl Cowley not only raised several times his salary but has widened our funding base. This has increased our flexibility in responding to African needs. However, our established links with existing major Funders such as DFID and Comic Relief have played a major role in this growth and it is this link between large and small funders which gives us the sustainable funding so essential to sustainable development.

In particular, the Comic Relief programmes have been central to our work on literacy and business training. In 2004 their Innovations programme enabled people to apply this improved knowledge through revolving micro-credit schemes in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Cameroon. Comic Relief sustained Cameroon through Bridge Funding throughout 2004, and the year ended with a major new commitment from them which will sustain the paralegal extension work there for a further five years. Similarly DFID have underpinned work in the Gambia and early in 2005 confirmed funding for a new and extensive programme in Cameroon which by taking us into new parts of the country (including Francophone areas) will double our commitment there.

In each country the emphasis varies but the overall aim is to enable people who have been marginalised to become more self-sufficient. One of Village Aid's important roles is to spread this knowledge between countries and indeed within the countries by developing partnerships with existing groups in the countries and helping them to expand their capability. The £270,000 EU Block Grant mentioned in my 2003 report arrived in mid 2004 and is already contributing to this dissemination of learning.

In my 2003 report I also mentioned the intention to become

involved with HIV awareness. Small scale projects started in 2004 but we have yet to obtain funding for major project in this area. Incidence of HIV is increasing rapidly in West Africa and may rise to the 20-30% of population found in parts of Southern Africa. The challenge is to persuade people that it is just as important to prevent a problem growing as it is to treat a bigger existing one.



On a more personal level, a major excitement in 2004 for me was a visit to Ghana in December. My experiences there put 'flesh & blood' on the bare bones of our programmes described briefly above.

Ghana is not as poor as some countries, but in the communities where Village AiD is active literacy rates are below 10% (compared with 75% across the country as a whole), the nearest water can be several kilometres away and there may be no public transport or electricity. People work hard to survive yet I saw young adults prepared to take the time to learn to write and do simple sums. They debated what priorities the village should have through the learning circles we had established. Meetings were not dominated by 'establishment' personalities although a chief might attend to show his interest; women took an important part in the learning and debates (babies in slings on their backs, younger children playing games at their feet). Debate was vigorous but not chaotic and great care was taken to make sure everyone understood what was going on.

The Northern region Innovations programme was being evaluated during my visit. The evaluation highlighted a wide variation in standards between communities but there seemed a willingness to accept criticism and to use experiences from the more successful villages to help the less successful. Observers were brought in from outside (including Sammy Stober Taylor from our partners in Sierra Leone). Our partner in Ghana's Eastern Region, YOWE, reported



on their very successful micro-credit projects; the structure of these projects ensures that the whole community takes responsibility and they appreciate that if one team defaults on a loan, others will lose an opportunity; they have achieved 100% repayment of loans including 25% interest charge.

Another way in which sustainability was demonstrated was that YOWE prepared a successful grant application to their own government for work on AIDS awareness. Posters all over Ghana highlight the dangers of AIDS, but in our areas few speak English and fewer read it and this is where Village AiD's programmes help. Government interest is shown in other ways and in the North, the Ministry of Agriculture works closely with our partners SIMLI – Aid, promoting the use of compost pits to reduce fertiliser usage reducing costs and pollution together. In another community, increasingly educated lobbying has stimulated the government to build a primary school in their village. These activities show not only how we are helping people to help themselves but also that benefits extend far beyond the bare figures in Village AiDs' accounts.



Staff and community members in Sierra Leone

In the UK we achieved the 20% growth in charitable expenditure we planned for 2004, £462,000, as opposed to £361,899 in 2003. Our total income rose from £456,844 in 2003 to £678,000, with much of the balance waiting to be disbursed early in 2005. We expect a similar growth in charitable expenditure in 2005, and hope to maintain administration costs below 10% of total expenditure.

Staff illness has meant a slight delay in producing our 2004 audited accounts which will be presented as normal at the AGM, with a full financial report for 2004, including a list of major donors available on request. Low administrative overheads mean that staff, trustees and volunteers all work hard to achieve this, and once again the excellent spirit of the organisation is evident.

Overall, I am happy to report Village AID is in an extremely strong position to ensure growth and sustainable development for many years to come.

James Kellie

Cameroon



The Programme Coordinator of MBOSCUA, Aliou Sali provides an update of their programme.

In July 2004 the programme received funding from three main sources i.e. The EC Block Grant, Comic Relief Bridge-funding, (through Village AiD) and Canada Pro-Democracy of the Canadian High Commission. It was also supported by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

The projects' overall objective for the one year was to strengthen the capacity of Mbororo–Fulani women, their communities and institutions to address the high level of exploitation, rapidly dwindling livelihood opportunities, continuing social exclusion and lack of access to basic services in Cameroon's North West province.

Within this period there have been some major outcomes in the various programme components as outlined below.

1) Para-legal extension programme:

Seven Para-legal officers were recruited, trained and served in the 7 Divisional advice offices. The Para-legals effected community education visits to 68 communities reaching some 3,054 people. Areas covered include HIV/AIDS, civil and civic education, land tenure, citizenship, conflict management, women and children rights. 50 persons were assisted to acquire national identity cards, 4 people have been assisted to secure title deeds for their grazing lands and 365 supported to register for the October 2004 presidential elections.

In terms of legal representation in court, 29 matters have been handled so far of which 9 judgements have been passed in favour of the victims, 8 are pending judgements and 12 pending determination. Also within this year there have been 165 recorded cases of human right violations who all received counselling from the Para-legals. A newsletter was produced to share information on the this programme.

2) Enterprise Development:

This domain focused on two main areas, training and loans to groups.

a). Training was provided on business management, pepper farming, sheep production and gender sensitive participatory approaches. In all 817 people took part, mostly women, apart from 197 men who came forward for the gender training. The key outcomes of the gender training include a woman in Sabga community challenging the decision of her husband by refusing to sign for polygamy on the grounds that she was not consulted as partner initially, another woman in Ntambang community who has never sat in the sitting room of her brother-in-law house, overcame this culture of pulaaku

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(Mbororo social code of conduct) to sit and discuss freely in the brother-in-law's sitting room. When questioned on this sudden change she said 'I have had gender training'. All men who participated during the gender training sessions have requested more of such training for their communities.

b). Credit delivery: A total of 15 groups have benefited, receiving a total loan disbursement of £6,350, which they matched with their own 10% contribution. The number of groups due to make repayment are 12, with an amount of £2,188 and an amount of £1,686 recovered making a recovery rate of 77%. Also there are five groups with profit level above £80, six highly performing groups, six averagely performing groups and three least performing groups.

3) Literacy and training:

This includes sponsorship to students, provision of basic didactic materials to schools and support to 24 literacy circles. Within this year 17 schools in all the seven Divisions and three head teachers benefited from the programme. Didactic materials provided to these schools included chalk, text books, pens, buckets, maps/charts and cups. Also three head teachers had their salaries each paid for five months by the programme, thus reducing the burden of the Parent Teachers Association of the schools. The fees and some basic needs of 10 girls and four boys in secondary schools and four students in university were provided by the programme amounting to more than a £1,000

The program also supported 24 literacy circles (three are men's circles) with basic writing materials, black boards, trainings and support to their community facilitators. Ten out of these 24 groups also received training on the Hope for the African Child Initiative (HACI) on the identification of orphans and vulnerable children and the fight against HIV/AIDS. Three hundred and fifty women and 74 men benefited from these trainings. More women concerns are increasingly being listened to such as the creation of the Korgol school which emerged from the REFLECT circle's learning.

4) Institutional Capacity Building:

Organisational Development and staff capacity of MBOSCUDA have been enhanced through training organised for community facilitators, programme staff and board members by her local, national and international partners. The outcomes of this are MBOSCUDA's ability to engage and meet-up with the standards of its partners. MBOSCUDA has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN, a member of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and holds observer status with the International Criminal Court (ICC). This has been made possible because of the human and material resources of the organisation. MBOSCUDA is also now liaising with local partners to fund raise for micro projects like HACI, funded by Plan Cameroon. MBOSCUDA's capacity to lobby and advocate have been greatly improved within this period.

The Gambia

Nuhu Salihu, Africa Programme Co-ordinator writes:

The end of 2004 brought our work in The Gambia into the 5th and final year of a DFID funded project. The focus of this project is literacy, agricultural extension, enterprise development and rights awareness. This is the only country where the main local partner carries the name Village AiD. But this is likely to change soon, as the programme develops the capacity to sustain the intensely practical yet socially embedded development initiatives in Lower Saloum District—one of the poorest and most marginalised in The Gambia.

Village AiD The Gambia (VATG) has been able to raise funds to support emerging needs and specific aspects of the programme. A project submitted to NAS (National AIDS Secretariat) received £12,611 over the next 2 years and another project submitted to CIDA (Canada International Development Agency) secured £5,100 to support orphans. Collaboration with key partners have also been fruitful, including hosting volunteers from American Peace Corps and REAP (Resource Efficient Agricultural Production) a Canadian partner. Sean Sloan took over from Labib El-Ali, who helped build up the agricultural component of a one year pilot project funded by CIDA through REAP.

Abdoulie Jallow, the manager of the Gambia Agro-ecological Village - GAEV model project, reports from Kaur: Abdoulie is an agricultural extension officer.



"Farmer capacity building through training is a pre-requisite to the successful implementation of the GAEV project. In this vein, several training sessions are being conducted with a view to building the capacity of the farmer trainers who are the potential facilitators for the on farm farmer-to-farmer training programmes. The following trainings have so far been conducted.

- Introduction to ecological farming
- Hungry season food security
- Soil and water conservation
- Gender
- Group / CBO (community based organisation) management / leadership
- Dry season vegetable production
- Food processing and preservation
- Animal management and agroforestry
- Nursery (trees) management

The training on ecological farming has introduced the participants to the principles and concepts of ecological farm practices whilst the training on hungry season food security has exposed participants to the problems affecting food security, analysis of those problems and finding solutions to address them. Group management trainings has improved the leadership and management skills of the CBO leaders so as to enhance effective CBO management thereby ensuring viable village level organisation.



Ghana

Siat Kanturib gives detailed feedback on the agricultural work of SIMLI, Village AiD's main partner in Northern Ghana. Subsistence agriculture is the core income provider for all rural African communities.

Simli Out To Combat Poor Soils Situation In Savelugu – Nanton District

SIMLI research revealed lands in most communities in the district are seriously affected by soil fertility decline. This leads to low incomes; food shortages, school dropouts, youth migration, and family instability or conflicts.



Simli has embarked on certain mitigating actions with the community members; composting, use of animal manure, cultivating cover crops such as Mucuna, and legumes such as groundnut. A member each from the 15 communities was trained as Para-extensionist who lead in all Agric activities in the communities.

COMPOSTING: composting, was carried out in all the 15 communities. A farmer at Zaazi by name, Afa Adam, invited other farmers both in his community and outside to see a demonstration plot on which compost was applied. This plot was formerly considered “dead” for years. The vigour with which the maize crop grew and the green colour of the plants surprised him and those in the community. After the harvest, the farmer remarked, “I now can say without doubt that compost can revive dead lands”.

M ma Abiba of Zaazi was full of smiles as she was busily working in her vegetable farm on which she had applied compost. The Aleefu, Bra, and Ayoyo were green, fresh and attractive to the eye.



Another woman was working on another field, which she said was still productive even though compost was applied in the rain season. The woman said, “With the yields of vegetables we are getting, most of the girls who have plots to cultivate vegetable will no more migrate to the south”.

Inufa Fuseini, a farmer confessed that he would stop buying and applying chemical fertilizer on his crops and now use compost. he said, “This is my third compost heap I have made in one year.” At the time of this remark, Inufa Fuseini had bagged compost and was

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The training of dry season vegetable production has improved the production skills of women vegetable growers to increase their dry



season vegetable production and create an increase source of income and food. On the other hand, the training on food processing and preservation has equipped the participants with requisite knowledge and skills in vegetable processing and preservation. They have developed knowledge and skills in making “garri” from cassava, jam from tomato, papaya, baobab and sorrel (“wonjo”) and also pepper sauce.

Participants to the training on tree nursery management have acquired some skills in the development and management of tree nurseries. They have now began developing their own tree nurseries in their back yards in preparation for the next tree planting week usually taking place in August annually.

Dry season vegetable production

Women vegetable growers in Torro Ba and Jahawur Mandinka have been very active in embarking on dry season vegetable production. As part of its intervention, the project has provided assorted seeds to farmers in the two project villages. VATG has intervened in supporting farmers of Jahawur Mandinka with cowpea, pepper, sorrel and cabbage seeds. They have also continued to multiply the sweet potato provide by NARI (National Agricultural Research Institute) earlier in the year. The project supported farmers in Torro Ba with tomato, sweet pepper, lettuce, eggplant and cabbage seeds. In addition the project also provided onion seedlings to farmers in Torro Ba who were interested in growing onions.

Farm planning and development process

Farmers have been sensitised on the need for a better planning of farm activities. No final agreement has yet been made. However, the project is quite mindful in avoiding delays in the development of farm plans. By the end of April, the farmer trainers will be trained on the development of farm plans. There after they will develop their own farm plan in the long term.

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about to cart it to his farm. "At first, I did not believe this method would help the soil at all but now I have already benefited immensely from compost. The good thing is that it is not heavy to carry even on bicycles."

Cover Cropping and Legumes

Mucana seed was distributed to Gbanga, Nambagla, Laligu, Zaasi, Tinkurigu, Zonayili and Kpendua. The vigorous growth of Mucana plants and the leaves during the rainy season convinced farmers that, Mucana could solve their soil infertility problem. The groundnuts farms gave low yields but the idea that legumes are nitrogen fixing was explained to farmers.

Use of Animal Manure

Farmers were encouraged to spread animal manure on their farms especially Bihinayili, Limo, and Kpendua. Apart from these, dynamic kraaling was practiced. Sulemana, the Para – extensionist of Zaazi was proud to send any visitor to a five acres piece of land, which is covered with cattle manure as a result of dynamic kraaling. These activities contribute immensely to improving soil fertility and increasing crop yield.

Siat Kanturib – Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. Simli-AiD

Foster Girl Pulls Others Along

Thank God many people are responding to SIMLI's call for parents to respect the rights of children and allow them to live with their parents and enjoy affection and the necessary protection every child deserves. Fostered girls in particular suffer all sorts of discrimination in their fostered homes including odd jobs, taking lesser rations of any meal in the home she lives, washes the dirtiest clothes, fetches nearly all the water for both domestic and other purposes in that house, cleans the compound and yard and all that one can think should be done in the home. Education is only a mirage where the fostered parent thinks the girl child should go to school. In some situations the fostered girl is comparable to a rag. For it is the rag that cleans every filth in a home.

In the first publication of SIMLI's newsletter; we feature Safia, as one of the fostered girls who was caught up in the jaws of fosterage. In all its efforts, SIMLI rescued Safia back to her biological parents in Nawuni and she is now in her second term in class one in Bulugu primary school which is located about two kilometres away from her home. In my two visits to Gushegu District this year; I made time to see how Safia is faring both at home and/or at school. She is doing well and loves school. In Safia's village, another girl, Arahisetu Abdulai, has been traced from her fostered home back to her biological home and she too is now in school with Safia.

Following up to the school, another seven girls owned up that they are fostered and have temporarily been allowed to go to school. Teachers told us these girls will not have the opportunity to stay in school up to the third year, because they would have grown big enough to start Kayayoo, (portering) rather than schooling. This visit was just to one school out of many in this District. Simli is liaising with other agencies to tackle the problem, rife across Northern Ghana.

Siat Kanturib

Sierra Leone

Literacy and micro-credit disbursement through SLYEO has continued successfully through 2004 in Tonkalili district, and many small economic projects have flourished.

However, perhaps the major achievement of 2004 for Village AiD's partners in Sierra Leone was the launching of a new project "Addressing Youth Poverty in Post War Sierra Leone. Run through YAPAD, Youth Alliance for Peace and Development, this was made possible by a Block Grant co-funding arrangement between Village AiD, many Sierra Leone Youth Organizations and the European Commission.

Fattu Bundu, the YAPAD Project Co-ordinator, introduces the first phase of their work.

Highlight On The Implementation of The "Addressing Youth Poverty In Post War Sierra Leone Project"

The first phase of this project was marked with a considerable level of consultation, identification of key players and their



involvement in the general implementation of the project. implementers came to understand the issues, the methodology of the project's implementation, and the expected outcomes.

There were successful implementation of three chiefdom-based workshops and two advocacy campaigns in the North and Western Area Districts, the approval and disbursement of six institutional strengthening grants for capacity building of smaller member organizations in the Northern, Eastern and Western Area districts respectively. A total of Forty Million Leones was disbursed to the first set of four organizations undertaking Enterprise Development activities in Agriculture (mechanized farming and animal husbandry) in Port Loko, Tonkolili, Bombali Shebora and Kono districts. In reality, these activities aim at strengthening existing efforts/structures in enterprise development programmes undertaken by youth organizations at district and chiefdom levels. This project hopes to undertake a series of activities in other chiefdoms within Sierra Leone up to mid 2006.

Fattu F Bundu Project Coordinator



Early and Forceful Marriage: A Barrier to Girl Child Development.

The issue around early and forceful marriage is nothing new in our societies. Our fore-fathers practiced the culture of either marrying so many wives, especially young girls below the age of eighteen to not only help them in their farming activities, but more so to use them as sex slaves to satisfy their sexual desires. Parents of the old order forced their daughters into early marriages for quick financial gains (bride price) and material wealth.

During the ten-year civil war, young girls between the ages of eight to fifteen were either conscripted into or willingly joined the warring factions. Most of the girls who were abducted without their consent were used as sex slaves. They were forced to marry senior members of the combatants during the war. Some also served as informants thus depriving them of their right to education and safe motherhood due mainly to their vulnerability in times of war.

There are so many international instruments, including the Sierra Leone constitution advocating universal education with emphasis on the girl child education. One such document that is making this clarion call is the CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN [CEDAW], which was adopted and opened for signature, ratification, and accession by the General Assembly Resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979.

Article 10 –Right to education debar all forms of discrimination in education including the infringement of women to work and study in all fields of knowledge and also wipe out all stereotyped beliefs about the roles of men and women in society

Article 16 –Equality in Marriage urges all state parties to abolish all laws that bias against women relating to marriage and family affairs, and should ensure equality in all aspects of marriage and to freely choose whom one wants to marry.

We at YAPAD are of the firm conviction that there is an urgent need to address this issue in this country, especially in the rural areas where our parents are trading their girl children all in the name of poverty. Despite the promulgation of the Education Act of 2004 which lays emphasis on the promotion of the girl child education by levying fine on parents who refuse to send their girl children to school, reform will not hold unless our parliament domesticates the CEDAW convention into our laws. Only then will mechanisms be put in place to realize the dream for our less fortunate sisters in the rural areas where archaic customary laws are still existing relating to marriage.

There is also the need for organizations working on the promotion of the girl child education to properly engage youth serving agencies and youth groups, especially those in the rural areas who will be able to bring out issues relating to forceful and early marriage within their communities.

Suliaman H Bangura-Advocacy/Monitoring Officer-YAPAD.

Director's report

2004 has been a busy year! Alongside Nuhu Salihu, George Ferguson, Graeme Roberts and me, Darryl Cowley joined the staff in April as our first full time fund raiser. This enabled Jan Stetka, after ten years of loyal service as volunteer Membership secretary and Chair of the Fundraising Committee, to step down and return to his many other business, and archaeological interests. We own a great debt of gratitude to Jan who has worked unstintingly over the years, to chaperone Village AiD into financial maturity. We wish him every blessing in the future.

Bill Moore, another very loyal and supportive volunteer editor for Village AiD bulletins and reports, has also been allowed to "relax", if one can call it that as he is so busy as a Local Councillor, and Oxfam activist.

Other volunteer workers, albeit with us for shorter periods in 2004 also gain our grateful thanks, Judith Green contributed mightily to our fundraising and publicity and local appeals, both as a staff member and as a volunteer, Chris Love brought much needed financial and administrative help with donor support. Our current team of George Wolfe, Sue Walker, Yoshiko Fukuhara and Carol Silvera Philips are invaluable. Village AiD could not exist without its loyal team of volunteers!

The Board of Trustees has also seen comings and goings. Chris Shepley has retired after many years loyal and productive service, many as Chair, and Giles Mohan also retired, as academic work prevented him from coming to Board meetings. He remains a friend and advisor to Village AiD from the Open University. Dr Sam Hickey was re-elected to the Board, with his expert knowledge of Cameroon, and we were joined by Caroline Dobinson, a Ghanaian woman from the Eastern Region area, and now resident in Derby. Caroline has been a volunteer with Village Aid for some time, and used to work for the trade Union movement in Ghana.

Supporters may have noticed that we have been revising our promotional materials and bulletins. We are pleased with this new, fresh look, with its positive imaging of African people, and an updated logo. We are pointing supporters more and more to our website, with its fundraising "Buyat" link to high street shopping, and other ethical suppliers, and in future will always offer our bulletins online to those who prefer it this way.

Susanne Garnett