

DEVELOPMENT IN GARDENING (DIG)

2018 April 16 - DIG Deeper in Uganda: Batwa Program Entering Year 2

Who are the Batwa? One of the world's most culturally rich yet extremely vulnerable communities, the Batwa have been caught in a cycle of poverty since 1992 after being evicted from the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest and becoming conservation refugees. Still to this day, the Batwa have some of the worst health outcomes certainly in Uganda if not in all of Africa.

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LEARNING ABOUT THE COMMUNITY:

After getting on the ground in November 2016, DIG spent two months undergoing an intensive site assessment through a **baseline study, stakeholder analysis, committee and leadership meetings, crop viability study, building a team, and fine tuning the implementation model.**

We found that the average household was only educated to the equivalent of grade 1. The stakeholder analysis informed the project that many other actors had been present within the Batwa communities, but not many projects were being retained. **This led to a focus on ensuring that our project incorporated sustainable systems.** The crop viability study found that **steep graded landscapes, low soil fertility, and water insecurity** would pose a challenge and that **vegetable variety and sustainable techniques should be carefully chosen.**



FORMING THE TEAM:

Lauren Masey, our Batwa Project Coordinator identified two Batwa members living in one of the communities whose education had been supported through a diploma level. **Robert** Ngabirano and **Wilber** Serusiru were then selected to become facilitators, building trust between the community and DIG while counseling with Batwa leadership committee to retain culture and practicality within the project. Both Robert and Wilber underwent staff training in basic sustainable agriculture, financial management, nutrition trainings, and gender sensitivity. Then we began using them to train other facilitators and we've grown staff to include 4 more Batwa facilitators and one Field Assistant.

PROGRAM DESIGN:

DIG has engaged farmers in a **three-phase field school** that incorporated **trainings in sustainable agriculture, nutrition, and household financial management centered around demonstration gardens**. The 160 households were offered the opportunity to participate in our seasonally-based field schools. Our **first** field school was termed **Mobile Farmer Field School (MFFS)**, intending to build basic agriculture skills and build trust between DIG and the community. **This 17-week training program was focused on growing foods that the Batwa prioritized while including all the food groups**. The **second** phase, **Farm, Food, and Finance School (FFFS)**, aimed to review basic agriculture skills, build the capacity of group leaders to manage their gardens, and **ensure techniques were being adopted at a household level**. This phase introduced new vegetables and more difficult agricultural concepts to groups. We also were able to focus more on nutrition and financial management.



We currently in the **third** phase, **Sustainability School (SS)**.

This has been designed to support groups in **becoming completely self-reliant** and will **focus on market-driven vegetables**.

This final phase will ensure that project will continue after DIG has left the community as we expand into neighboring communities.

THE IMPACT:

The impact seen at both the community and household levels are numerous.

DIG conducted our baseline and invited 100% of the families to participate in the project. We trained over 80% of the households in nutrition, sustainable agriculture or cooking demonstrations and **developed home gardens in 105 of the 160 households.**



To date with the Batwa, DIG has conducted:



111 training hours for each farmer



4 financial literacy trainings



5 nutrition and health-related group trainings



28 sustainable agriculture group trainings

We have included 15 vegetable varieties within our demonstration gardens, and host 5 locally available organic solutions to pest control and soil erosion. **Over 100 household gardens have been established, and 97% of our farmers have adopted one or more sustainable agriculture technique at home. Household gardens support over 400 individuals within three communities, showing numerous impacts in health, nutritional and the economic status of families.**



So far, the Batwa have seen success in meeting the program objectives:

Increased Adoption of Sustainable and Climate Resilient Practices - 97%

Adoption rate of climate resilient practices such as enriched raised beds, companion planting, organic fertilizers, etc seen during large rainfall last month where **DIG** Batwa Farmers gardens remained intact while neighbors farmers' gardens were washed away.

Increased Food Security for Household - Weekly food expenditure reduced and garden diversity increased from 0-3 types to 8-11 types.

Improved Nutrition of Families - Consuming 3 more meals a week from their own gardens

Increased Farmer Income - Income generated from garden produce increased 4 times.

The Bawta DIG- graduated farmers grow more, consume more, sell more, and save more. This impacts their nutrition and health of vulnerable families but the sustainable practices are also changing the environment and land use in their communities.

TO SEE WHAT THIS MEANS ON A PERSONAL LEVEL, READ ABOUT THE KATAMA FAMILY HERE.

Meet the Katamas

This Batwa family used to beg for dregs, feeding their 5 children the leftover sorghum from a locally produced drink only once per day. When the couple joined the DIG program, they were skeptical of the outcome as many NGO's had come to their village for projects that were short-term. The Katamas donated the little land they had for the demonstration plot. When they witnessed the benefits the program brought, the couple reclaimed their land and are now growing spinach, cabbage, beetroots, onions, and carrots. "We are now feeding our children two well balanced meals per day and we've noticed a big change in their appearance and energy." Having farmers witness the health and economic value of food production has caused the farmers to take complete ownership of the project.

