

AS YOU OPEN YOUR EYES

The experience in Uganda has lessons for communities, young and old, around the world. Their story deserves to be told and, moreover, it is important that it is told so that

- › other communities can feel encouraged and equipped to take ownership of their challenges
- › leaders and decisions makers around the world start to recognise that solutions are in fact emerging from the communities and that they deserve support
- › participating communities will become more conscious of the depth of their experience

Therefore The Constellation in collaboration with Visual Development , developed a film project to present "Dancing Jajas" and five more stories of communities change processes. We want to bring them to everyone

To contribute to our project go on pif.one/openyoureyes

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Community Life Competence Process visit:
www.communitylifecompetence.org

To learn more about ageing with dignity, contact HENU at:
www.healthnestuganda.org

Dancing Jajas is the first episode of the Constellation's film project « As You Open Your Eyes »:
www.asyouopenyoureyes.com



DANCING JAJAS

A STORY ABOUT A SHARED DREAM
ENTEBBE, UGANDA

THE FILM & THE STORY

THE JAJAS. THE OLDER PERSONS. IN ENTEBBE ARE DANCING! AND THEY HAVE EVERY REASON TO DO SO SINCE THEY ARE LIVING THEIR DREAM!

In 2011, the jajas defined their shared dream as:

«We older people want to live in harmony.»

They are very serious in working towards that shared dream. «Every time we go astray, we remind each other, 'Remember, people, we want to live in harmony.'»

The older persons did not wait for others to make their dream come true. They discussed the practices that would help them to reach that dream: for example, they wanted to have a healthy lifestyle, to mobilise their own resources and to eat a healthy diet. They assessed their performance at each of these practices and the resources they had at hand and then developed an plan, with small, doable actions where the strengths of each older person are used for the good of all. The retired (but not tired!) nurse checks the blood pressure of her friends, the nature lover develops medicines from herbs, each member exercises in their own time and when the group is together, they exercise together. They celebrate whenever there is progress!



In the 30 minute film 'Dancing Jajas', the people of Kitubulu, Katabi, Bugonga and Kabaale tell their own story of the progress that they have made and the challenges that they have faced.

These groups are not seeking to declare their independence from outside resources and support, but equally they are not sitting and waiting for someone to help them.

The film contains much about the practicalities of ageing, food, health and income generating activities of different sorts. But at the end of the film, we hear a deeper message. Arthur says, «The issue is personal connectivity; the love and care that comes when you start to recognise yourself as a people, as older persons.» And then we hear from Cossy, «Love, care, comfort and respect. Once you do that for elderly people, you live for longer and longer!»

THE PROCESS & THE COOPERATION

NOW PEOPLE STARTED TO SAY, 'WHAT CAN WE DO FOR OURSELVES?' RATHER THAN 'WHAT CAN SOMEONE DO FOR US?'

The process that the older persons are using is called the Community Life Competence Process (CLCP) and has been developed by the Constellation, an association active since 2005 in facilitating local responses.

The process is used by groups of people all over the world. It puts ownership of issues and of solutions in the hands of people who will benefit most from addressing the issue. Health Nest Uganda (HENU) is facilitating the process to help the community to realise their strengths and to respond to their concerns.

Through this approach, older persons have realised that they can contribute to their own wellbeing and that of their community.

HENU, an indigenous, non-profit organisation started in 2007 and is based in Entebbe. HENU reaches out to vulnerable groups like older persons, their families and communities. Many of the older persons are poor and yet are caretakers of orphans and vulnerable children and other older persons who are isolated and neglected. Volunteers from HENU provide them with social and emotional support and the tools to enhance their well-being by harnessing their skills.

When Arthur Namara, the executive director, started Health Nest Uganda, he looked far and wide for support. It was only in 2011 when CLCP was introduced to the community that HENU started to look from within the community and that changed everything. «Now people started to say, 'What can we do for ourselves?' rather than 'What can someone do for us?'»

Arthur concludes that for the first time, he sees elderly people acting from strength. «(When you interact with them, you see happiness, you see joy. » Exercise has become part of the communal and individual way of life. It is not easy to come away from one of these groups without having your blood pressure measured or finding yourself in an exercise session. People are growing their own fruit and vegetables, both as a source of income, but also as the basis of a healthy diet.)

One of the secrets to Uganda's success is the creation of a learning environment that allows older people to discuss their concerns openly and to learn from each other. This has led them to develop sustainable solutions. Their wisdom is relevant to all of us. The film makes clear that progress cannot be taken for granted. Cossy from Katabi describes their disastrous attempts to grow mushrooms. «People were unhappy and lost faith in us. They were disappointed and stopped coming to the meetings.» But the group reflected on their failure, they learned from their experience and they began again.