

SINA: a global movement for systemic change

By Etienne Salborn

“ I'm living my dreams and not dreaming my life”.

says James Bwinika, a refugee in the Nakivale Refugee Settlement in Uganda and a SINA member, the Social Innovation Academy. He had to flee his home country, the Democratic Republic of Congo, after violence and killings erupted. Today he is a successful social entrepreneur creating edutainment films with and for refugees about social challenges.

Like him, hundreds of marginalized youth are creating a future for themselves through a self-organized and freeresponsible model in three refugee camps in Uganda, Zimbabwe and urban centres in the DRC. The purpose of SINA is the creation of a global movement for systemic change.

SINA members believe in the quote of Eduardo Galeano: "Many small



people, in small places, doing small things can change the world.

SINA provides a pathway, tools and the mindset to shape a vision for the future and create new solutions. The people's own potentials to pursue purpose in the world are elicited, and community assets are used to build on strengths rather than deficiencies.

SINA lets young adults learn soft and professional skills by fully self-managing their communities while unlearning limiting beliefs, getting rid of the fear of failing, expanding one's comfort zone, discovering oneself, and setting goals and action plans. The community becomes an active driver for the generation of opportunities, jobs, and economic prosperity. Since the solutions become social enterprises, they are independent of donations and often tackle challenges at their roots.





Members in the communities take up roles and responsibilities, which allows for learning leadership skills hand-on while leading a part of SINA. An individual, for example, is in charge of water. Suppose no water is available in a community of 70 to 100 people. In that case, the role holder will need to solve the problem, deal with many angry individuals coming to her, create new solutions, plan better for the next month, budget, monitor, evaluate, etc. These are similar skills required when running a social enterprise. There is no staff, but everyone instead becomes the managers of the community. Everyone creates her own curriculum through the responsibilities taken over, while regular sessions, Life-Coaching and Mentoring- all given by SINA members themselves- provide guidance and support.

Self-organization using the social technology "Holacracy" becomes a tool that goes beyond empowerment but makes everyone as powerful as possible and a leader and follower at the same time. It intrinsically motivates all members with full ownership. SINA disrupts pre-defined education and already solved problems by allowing its members to continuously create real-life solutions, which do not have answers yet. The pedagogy fosters a leadership whereby one leader creates further leaders, and the power of education lies in the learners' hands. Freedom and responsibility are combined in the way that the more responsibility one takes, the more freedom she gains.

“ More freedom...”

Over 40 social enterprises have emerged from SINA since its start in 2014 and close to 200 jobs have been created. The enterprises are solving a variety of social and environmental challenges. The most significant achievements have been the transformation in SINA members. Some, who seemed to have given up on life or went through traumatizing experiences, found a new purpose and gained the skills to create a social enterprise that supports others as well.

Solving a variety of social & environmental challenges

SINA has seen that difficult backgrounds often become the driving force for the creation of social enterprises. Challenging experiences can be transformed into meaningful assets or skills to support others not to have to go through similar experiences. The SINA story goes back to 2006. The German, Etienne Salborn, had finished his high school in Germany and volunteered for one year in the Kankobe Orphanage in Uganda. Etienne realized that the children had no chance to continue their education after finishing primary school and were left to look after themselves at a young age. Etienne started a sponsorship program for secondary education in boarding schools.



It grew by about ten new orphans being sponsored yearly. In 2009, Etienne founded a non-profit organization to manage the sponsorship program. The first generation of the sponsored youth finished high school in 2013, not able to join university because of too high tuition fees and unable to find employment due to extremely high youth unemployment in Uganda. In an Open Space Dialogue between the graduates and the students who were about to finish high school, a solution emerged: we need a space where we create our own jobs. The idea of SINA was born.

“We need a space where we create our own jobs” 



A specific example is Joan Nalubega, who is contributing towards eradicating Malaria in Africa. More than two-thirds of malaria deaths are children below the age of five and Uganda is highly affected. Etienne and Joan met 14 years ago in the Kankobe Orphanage. Joan was missing school frequently due to Malaria. After primary school, she joined the sponsorship program and in 2015 joined SINA. She started to unleash her potentials and passionate about fighting Malaria. Joan started "Uganics"- a social enterprise producing organic mosquito repellent soap. It is sold in rural Uganda at the same price as ordinary soap through a social business model.

Soap is an everyday product even impoverished families in Africa use almost daily. It helps mothers with children prevent mosquito bites. Tourists in Uganda have high fears of Malaria and like a natural way of preventing mosquitoes. The tourism sector has a higher purchasing power. Uganics sells its products at a higher profit margin to mostly hotels, allowing subsidizing the sales in rural areas to achieve its social impact. Uganics won the Johnson & Johnson Africa Innovation Challenge and Joan became a 2020 African Business Hero.



**Joan Nalubega -
2020 African
Business Hero**



A transformation like this is what keeps Etienne Salborn excited every day to see what hidden potentials lie within people and communities. Etienne understood that SINA is not a property to be managed but rather a living system with an unfolding evolutionary purpose. This way, SINA does not impose itself on others or claim to be the "right" solution but welcomes people and organizations in the refugee context and from fragile states to explore synergies for replication. Young people go through the SINA model in existing SINA Communities and experience it first-hand. They get equipped with the skills and tools for possible replication in new locations.

Interest in SINA's potential replication goes as far as Turkey and Venezuela and SINA are currently looking for further partnerships. Each SINA Community is independently and locally registered. All form part of a community of communities to share best practices and collectively improve the model while inspiring others to self-organize and solve their own challenges. To create further SINA Communities, funding is needed but has been a challenge since COVID-19 hit the global

For more information or details on how to support SINA visit: <https://socialinnovationacademy.org/>





UPCYCLE
AFRICA



out of _____
RUBBISH
_____ we make
A HOME
www.upcycleafrica.org